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Catherine Warren



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A
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By *ERASMUS WARREN*, Rector of Worlington
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TO THE
READER.

SO necessary it is to shew Mercy, and such is the superlative worth of the Grace or Duty; that it is as hard to speak enough in its Commendation, as it is to do too much for its Encouragement. But as he that shews the Sun in his Meridian Brightness, does more to convince Men of his Glory, than he could do by most accurate describing it; so he that gives a clear Account
of

THE PREFACE.

of Mercy, and lays open its plain Natural Beauty; does more to win Men to love and practise it, than the most elaborate Encomiums could do, while that's concealed. This therefore I have here endeavour'd; I have set forth Mercy in its Nature, Kinds, Expressions, &c. and therein have better exhibited its Excellency, than the best Elogies without them could represent it: The pure display of its high innate Qualities, being more effectual to put us upon dispensing it; than the force of any other Arguments,

The PREFACE.

ments, tho' backt with finest Eloquence.

For in Mercy there's so much Native Loveliness, that it wants no Artificial Embellishments to indear it. It is enticing of it self, and the serious view of its Native Glories and appendant Benefits, are powerful Charms to draw all that are, or would be good, to exercise it. I am willing to hope therefore, that what is deliver'd in this Manual, may induce some to be Merciful; or at least help others to continue so. And if what I have done shall

The PREFACE.

shall either way prevail, I shall think my pains in urging Charity with all the pious plainness I could use, sufficiently recompenc'd. Why I chose to write of this Subject rather than another, good Reasons might be given; tho' one may serve instead of many, which is this. Of all the Virtues and Duties belonging to a true Christian, there is none that surpasseth Mercy. For as it is of highest worth in it self, so it is very beneficial to others, as well as to them that exercise it. And as GOD will accept nothing more graciously at our hands; so to that He will shew even greatest respect.

THE PREFACE

spect when He distributes the
Rewards of Glory. I hope pious
Readers will consider this well,
and then the serious Thought will
guide their Practice.

C H A P.

R U L E

FOR

Shewing Mercy.

C H A P. I.

I. *Likeness to GOD, the End of Religion.* II. *GOD proved Merciful by nine Arguments.* III. *Because He is merciful, We must be so.* IV. *What His Mercy is.* V. *The two Kinds of it.* VI. *It is excellent.* VII. *Which obliges us to Imitate it.*

I. **I**T was the true Saying of a good * man, that *the highest Religion is to imitate GOD whom we worship.* And the design of Religion being to improve and perfect our Nature; it must reach its End when it makes us most like Him, as being then car-

ry'd up to its highest Pitch, in that assimilation. We therefore that pretend to true Religion, should be serious in this practice, making it our daily and diligent Exercise according to our power, to conform to the Blessed GOD we serve. And as it lies upon us to imitate Him in all we can; so we must do it particularly, in works of Mercy. And therefore in the first place, it will be necessary to prove that GOD is merciful, because we must be so upon that account.

II. Now that GOD is merciful, might be made good by a multitude of convincing Arguments; I alledge but the Nine that follow.

The *first* is *His Perfection*. The very Idea, or Notion of a GOD, contains infinite Perfection in it, it is of His very Definition, or Essence: the same to Him, that Light is to the Sun; or Roundness to a Circle; or Reason to a man. But then infinitely perfect. He cannot be, unless He is merciful, because mercy is one of those noble Ingredients, that go to the constituting of divine Perfection. For infinite Perfection consists of a compleat Aggregation of infinite Excellencies; and they all, most necessarily concentrating in GOD, 'tis impossible for Him to be destitute of mercy, or defective in it. For then He must be

be short in one of the integrating and most illustrious Glories of his Nature; and so He could not be infinitely perfect, and by consequence not truly GOD. For there may as well be a perfect World without Order; or a perfect Body without Substance, or Dimensions; as a perfect GOD without Mercy.

The *Second* Argument is *His Name*. By assuming that, He intended to express, and in some measure to explain His Nature to us. He proclaims it solemnly, *Exod. 34. 6. The LORD GOD merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, &c.* where the first Epithet is *merciful*, to insinuate mercy is a prime Attribute of His Essence. At least the Title plainly speaks His Temper, and is a clear indication of His naturally gracious Disposition. And He having pronounc'd so expressly of Himself, we may be sure he has mercy in Him, or that He has no Truth: and we must make him a strange kind of GOD, if from Him we abstract both compassion, and veracity. But He must as surely be merciful therefore as He has said it; that He may be really what He has declar'd Himself.

The *Third* Argument is *His exhibiting mercy by exercising it*. Nothing can afford to others, what it has not in it self: and there-

4 *A Rule for shewing Mercy.* Ch. I.

fore God shewing to Us abundance of Mercy, that proves it to abound in *Him*. Nor are His mercies to us easie to be computed in regard of their number: for like the Stars in the Firmament, or the Sands on the Sea-shore, or like the Sins of our ingrateful selves; they are too many to be reckon'd up. We can't duly contemplate them without losing our selves sweetly in the thoughts of the multitude: It will swallow us up in profound and pleasing wonder, and overwhelm us with surprizing and transporting Amazement. And how inconceivably merciful must that GOD be, from whom such numerous mercies descend?

A *Fourth* Argument is *His Delight in conferring Mercy*. For this He is singular, and stands by Himself, *Mic. 7. 18. Who is a GOD like unto Thee? that pardoneth iniquity, because He delighteth in Mercy.* Where things are done with ease and complaisance there must be something within to dispose the Agent to those Acts, and put him upon exerting them. Dispensing Mercy therefore being delightful to GOD, there must be a principle of exuberant Pity in Him, to prompt him to the work.

Where the Stream is small, and creeps on with a slow Current; it shews the Springs are low which feed it: and so must the force
or

Ch.I. *A Rule for shewing Mercy.* 5

or Powers in any Person be, where His performances are weak and feeble. But with GOD it is not thus in the issues of his clemency. For it is said of Him, and He says it of Himself, that He is the GOD of Mercies, and the Father of Mercies, and that He is rich in mercy, & plenteous in mercy, and that His Compassions fail not. So far are they from failing, that they are every day fresh; and flow from Him as light from the Sun, or heat from the Fire, with an holding constancy & perpetual freeness. And this argues inexhaustible mercy in Him, as that makes Him prone and forward to communicate it, and renders its Effluxes copious and liberal, highly pleasing to Him, as well as to us.

A Fifth Argument may be the Church's application to him for mercy. Where the best and wisest have always sought a thing, we must in reason conclude, there it is to be found. In GOD therefore there must be mercy, because of Him they have continually sought it for themselves and others. None ever seek for milk in a Rock, for Oil in a Flint, or for Pearls or diamonds in the dirt of the streets: that would be folly, not to say Phrenzy in those of meanest Capacity; it being obvious and evident that their labour must be vain. But the wisdom of all inspir'd from Heaven, and JESUS our LORD Who is divinest Wisdom; did hum-

bly Address to GOD for Mercy, and teach men to do it. An infallible proof that there is store of Mercy in His Nature.

A Sixth Argument will be the publishing and recording of his Mercy obtained. Where people have often sought a thing, and ever found it; they have grounds to think, and firmly believe that there it is. Yet such evidences of GOD's Mercy occur so frequently in the holy volume, that I need not cite any. The Bible, in good part (as even the incurious peruser may observe) is but a fair Register of laudatory commemorations of GOD's signal Mercies. Mercies so precious, that holy Persons favour'd with them, will for them make the Courts of Heaven Echo, with loud and endless praises at last.

I only add, that those Hymns of praise upon record in Scripture, ought to be lookt upon as the higher Testimonies of the divine Mercies, the Saints Experiences: Those Praises being offer'd to GOD, not only because they heard and believ'd Him to be merciful; but because they experimentally found Him so.

A Seventh Argument must be the Descriptions of GOD's Mercy, in its Properties, or Qualities. I mean, those we meet with in the sacred Books. Thus in *Psal. 103. 8.* we have an account of the plenitude, or fulness of GOD's Mercy: *the LORD is full of compassion and mercy.*

Full
not

not as a Coffer, or Treasury is of Money which is fast lockt up, so as none save the owner can come at it : But full as a Fountain is of Water which is always flowing forth, and freely offering it self to every one in great abundance.

The 11th verse of that *Psalme*, relates the Altitude and Immenity, the *high degrees*, and *vast measures* of God's Mercy. Look how high the Heaven is in comparison of the Earth; so great is His mercy towards them that fear Him.

The Sublimity of the Heavens; and the unmeasurable Space betwixt them and us; is but a dark shadow, representing the excessive heighth and greatness of the divine Mercy.

The 17th verse sets forth its *Duration*. And that's parallel, or proportionate to its Heighth and Amplitude: for it is not to be exercised for years, or ages, but to Eternity, if we do not obstruct and hinder it. *The mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him.* Were there more Eternities than one, it would not fail to reach thro' them all. It is no changing failing thing, but permanent as GOD Himself; nor can it be otherwise as being an emanation from His Blessed Essence. For which reason, as His Mercy has no Measure, so it can have no End; and having no End of being in it self, there shall be no End of its bounty to us. How transi-

ent soever other things are, and subject to change; the mercy of GOD is fixt and immutable. The Earth may be shaken, and its Mountains levell'd; Rocks shatter'd, and Rivers dry'd up; the Sun eclips'd, and Stars absorbt; Planets dissolv'd, and this Earth destroy'd: but the mercy of GOD shall always continue. And accordingly in the 136 Psalm, its Eternity is asserted seven and twenty times in these words; *His mercy endureth for ever.*

And in Psal. 25. 10. its universality is remarkt. *All the Paths of the LORD are mercy unto such as keep His Covenant.* Not only this or that, these or those Dispensations of the ALMIGHTY are Merciful; but all of them in general. However some may be irksome and uneasie, and others seem punitive and judicial; they are all tinctur'd with kindness, nay, pregnant with mercy to the truly Religious. Even the whole Course of divine Providence how severe soever they may think or find it; carries favour in it towards those that are good. Whatever GOD prevents, permits, or procures; we may conclude is done with design of mercy to us, if we be His. If He Smiles upon us, it is in mercy; if He frowns upon us, it is in mercy; and so it is when He corrects us with great (and as we may fear, with angry) sharpness. For He does all to re-
strain

CH. I. A Rule for shewing Mercy. 9

strain us from Sin, or to quicken us to Righteousness; to make us better, or keep us from growing worse.

I name but one Property of mercy more, its *Renovation*? 'Tis noted *Lam. 3. 23.* where the Prophet declares of the LORD'S Mercies, that *they are new every Morning.* To the mercies good men possess, others shall every day be added; tho' the old ones set not with the Sun, yet as oft as he rises, new ones rise with Him. And when GOD so abounds with Mercies, as that they can flow from Him in such continued streams; must He not be merciful?

But besides, this Seventh Argument which the written Word affords.

An Eighth may be drawn from the Word that is *Natural* and *Essential.* For how astonishing was the Mercy of our LORD CHRIST? He was a mighty Traveller in that blessed Road; and as He was never out of it, so in it He took such steps, and went such Stages as Heaven and Earth may ever wonder at.

We are told, *Heb. 2. 17.* that He was a *merciful High Priest*: and did He not extremely deserve the character, and answer it? For from His exalted Glories above he came down hither, on purpose to be made a Sacrifice for Sinners: to dye miserably on a Cross,

Cross, that so His Death might expiate our Guilt, and make us partakers of the immortal Life. Nor was He ever more merciful, than now; for He is *the same yesterday, to day, and for ever*, Heb. 13. 8. as rich in mercy, and as ready to shew it, to all qualified for it.

But then, if CHRIST was, and is so very Merciful, GOD of necessity must be the same; the Son being the likeness of the FATHER, and *the express Image of His Person*, Heb. 1.

3. The Last Argument to prove GOD merciful, shall be *the true Religion we profess*. Mercy is the basis on which that stands, or the main hinge upon which GOD's Worship, and man's Duty turn; *there is mercy with Thee, therefore shalt Thou be feared*; but take away mercy which supports Piety, and it would quickly fall to the ground. For should GOD deal with us in strict Justice, He must mark Iniquities; and then as the Psalmist interrogates *who shall stand?* For certain not the best of us all: for our Impurities would so taint our choicest Actions, as to provoke GOD not only to Slight our Performances, but to consume our Persons.

Besides;

I. Ch. I. *A Rule for shewing Mercy.* 11

Besides; The great and essential Parts of our Religion, Repentance, and Obedience; imply a Merciful GOD. For what could encourage *us* to the *one*, if His Mercy would not forgive us? and what could induce us to the *other*, if His Mercy would not reward us? and how could we accomplish *either*, much less *both*; if His Mercy did not assist us? For the Graces enabling us to be penitent and pious (without which we can never be truly religious) must come from GOD; and so unless His Mercy imparts them, they can never be ours.

III. Thus it appears that GOD is Merciful. And as it is a Doctrine of great Truth, so it should have mighty influence upon us. And that it may influence us aright, according to its proper natural Efficacy; it must work us into Conformity to GOD, and makes us like Him in our Measures and Capacities.

This we learn from our REDEEMERS Mouth, St. Luke 6. 36. *Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is Merciful.* Whence as 'tis evident, that GOD is merciful (else we could not imitate His pattern) so we must be like Him. And not only because He is our GOD, but for another great Reason, because He is our *Father*; that Relation binding to resemblance in what is excellent. For

as it often falls out, that children are like their natural Parents in bodily Features; so where the Temper of their Minds is laudable, it is their Duty to resemble them in that. But then it must be much more ours, to imitate GOD our heavenly Father, in Spiritual Excellencies and Perfections; we having a Divine Injunction for it, *Eph. 5. 1. Be ye followers of GOD as dear Children.* And we being to conform to GOD, in all His imitable Properties and Actions (as this General preceptive Direction implies;) nothing can discharge us from endeavouring to come up to Him as far as we are able in His ways and works of Mercy. And the more we answer Him in this or any other of His Attributes; the more we shall be His Children, or at least the more dear to Him. Tho' if in imitating Him we be remiss and careless, we not only violate the holy Command, intended to tye us to the important Duty; but also forfeit that high Relation to Him, wherewith we are, or may be honoured.

IV. But then to be merciful like GOD, being a thing of such consequence; it is necessary to understand *what* His Mercy is. For what we do not know, we can't imitate; no more than we can write after that Copy which we never saw. The Nature of GOD's Mer-

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cy therefore this short description will competently discover. *It is an Attribute of His, whereby He is willing to succour the miserable.* Willing to relieve all necessitous Creatures, according to their respective Needs and Complaints. So that divine Mercy is a relative Property, which tho' it exists in GOD's Being ; streams out and terminates in ours. It commiserates and helps all that want it, especially if they desire it, and be worthy of it in any measure. And this it does by Torrents of kind and suitable Refreshment, flowing from Him Who is the Fountain of infinite and eternal Goodness. According to which notion, they that most pity and assist the indigent and afflicted, do most commendably imitate the heavenly mercy.

V. And for the better understanding of GOD's Mercy, in order to due Imitation of it ; it will not be amiss to note that it is of *Two Kinds* :

**Common
And Special.**

1st, His mercy is *Common*, or General. And by this He affords external good things to His Creatures according to the Exigencies. So that here evil Men, and the very worst of them,

them, share in GOD's Mercy. They have the influence of the Sun, and the Light of the Moon; the guidance of the Stars, and the benefit of the Clouds, as much as any of the Righteous. They breathe in the same Air, and they dwell on the same Earth, and are kept alive by Refreshments of the one, and cloth'd and nourisht by the wholesome Fruits and products of the other.

And not only *Men* promiscuously, but all sorts of *Brutes* partake of this Mercy, and by it are provided for. And therefore it is said *Psal. 104. 14. GOD causeth the Grass to grow for the Cattle, as well as herb for the service of Man.* And the SPIRIT tells us, *Psal. 145. 16. He openeth His Hand and satisfieth every living thing.*

This (by the way) turns but ill upon the Impious, tho' they may make a good use of it. When they thrive in the World they are apt to please and pride themselves in it, and to value themselves mightily upon that Account. As if secular Plenty were an indication of their being in the right way; and present prosperity a sure pledge of future Happiness. But however they misconstrue it, 'tis nothing so.

Their flourishing Circumstances that puff them up, come but from GOD's common mercy, of which Beasts participate. And why should
loose

foolish Livers infer their uprightness here, or their felicity to come, from such enjoyments as set them only upon the same level with irrational Beings? In this they must strangely misinterpret Providence, and shew themselves egregiously weak and credulous: for were they not foolish to excess, they could not build such a mighty confidence on so slight a foundation.

II. GOD's Mercy is *Special*, or *peculiar*. And this extends to *Mankind* only, and according to their proper Qualities and Conditions, and with respect to their moral and eternal Interests. And as thus they are capable of noblest dispensations, so they are graciously favour'd with them. For GOD gives them His SON to Rule, as well as to Redeem them; and His SPIRIT to comfort as well as to regenerate them; and besides, the Guard of His Mighty Angels, He honours them with His Word, and Ordinances, and Ministers; as instruments of working Graces in them, to make them glorious for ever. This Special Mercy therefore with its fruits and benefits, we should prize and seek above all other, as being of highest worth and Moment.

VI. Now concerning GOD's Mercy (perhaps *His Special Mercy* chiefly) one instruction is observable, which the HOLY GHOST gives us ;

us; That in Psal. 36. 7. *How excellent is Thy Mercy, O GOD! and the Children of Men shall put their trust under the shadow of Thy Wings.* As the Words are emphaticall, and spoken with Wonder and Exclamation, and set it forth as excellent in it self: so they intimate it *excells* in reference to *Us*, as it kindly shelters us more than the rest of GOD's Attributes.

For tho' simply and abstractedly consider'd, His Attributes are all equal, as being infinite; yet with respect to the Creature; Mercy may be very preferable to every one of them. That is, as it favours the Creature more, and inclines such other Attributes to do it, as we could not otherwise bear the exercise of.

Thus the *Greatness* of GOD is really as excellent as His Mercy. But were it not for His Mercy, we should be tempted to think it would over-look us as beneath its care.

His *Glory* is naturally as excellent as His Mercy. But were it not for this, it might amaze and confound us with its dazzling Brightness.

His *Holiness* is essentially as excellent as His Mercy. But were it not for this, its transcendent Purity might abhor us for our Filthiness.

His *Power* is absolutely as excellent as His Mercy. But were it not for this, it might
forth-

Ch.I. *A Rule for shewing Mercy.* 17

forthwith cut us off, and destroy us eternally for our manifold Provocations.

His *Justice* is fully as excellent as His *Mercy*. But were it not for this, it would punish us intolerably for our Transgressions. Tho' by virtue of *that*, even His very *Justice* becomes our great Friend; so that *if we confess our Sins, He is just to forgive us our Sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*, 1 St. John 1. 9.

Here therefore lies the singular *Excellency* of *Mercy*, in that it is not only indulgent it self, but disposes all GOD's other Attributes to be exceeding favourable to *us*. By a noble Predominance it has over them, in managing providential Dispensations; it so governs them, as to turn them to our advantage: whereas otherwise they would have severer Influences and Effects upon us. Nay, sometimes GOD's *Mercy* favours Men even to the eclipsing of His *Glory* in the World. Thus, when He bears with His People in Hypocritical ways, they often reflect dishonourably upon Him. *I kept silence, and thou thoughtest that I was altogether as thy self*, Psal. 50. 21. So His patience to the *Assyrians*, and kind suspension of deserved Judgments; did but embolden them to reproach Him, and to affront Him with many and repeated Indignities: *My Name every day is*

blasphemed, Isa. 52. 5. And 'tis well known that while he suffers the wicked to flourish, their great prosperity becomes a stumbling-block to the righteous, and makes them ready to question His Justice and His Love. And when His Mercy is thus tender of the impious, to the seeming disadvantage of other of His Properties; no wonder that to Saints it should bring good out of evil.

And this may be one Meaning of that Word spoken by the Apostle, St. James 2. 12. *Mercy rejoiceth against Judgment.* It glories against it, or insults generously and joyfully over it; so that when some things happen, which if left to themselves, would be of ill consequence to us; Mercy so checks their Tendency, or changes their Operation, or some way or other so over-rules them, as to render them harmless, or very useful. Thus, when pain seizes our Bodies; or trouble our Minds; or terrour our Consciences; tho' in the incident Evils, their biting and bitterness enough to undo us: yet it so sways and sanctifies them, or else so supports and comforts us, as to make them minister to our Benefit.

And thro' this *glorying* of mercy against Judgment, it Usually comes to pass; that every righteous man can pronounce of the rigidest Lot he here meets with, as the King of Israel

Ch. I. *A Rule for shewing Mercy.* 19

Israel did of his : *it is good for me that I have been afflicted.* Or if his Experience does not so clear up gloomy Providences, as to enable him to discern and speak this *now* ; he shall certainly do it in the happy State, from a pleasing Reflection on his past Tribulations.

VII. But then GOD's Mercy being so *Excellent* by being peculiarly propitious to us ; from a sense of this, and in way of just Gratitude for it, we should devote our selves to works of Mercy ; that being the thing to which its superlative Excellency binds us. For the Gospel requires us to *approve things that are excellent*, Phil. i. 10. And that can never be done acceptably, or according to the SPIRIT's meaning, but in way of practice, where things *imitable* are recommended to our Approbation. And Mercy being of that nature, and recommended to us as such ; we are oblig'd to exercise it with Zeal and Diligence.

Concord , Sympathy , Kindness, Commiseration , and Civility , are laudable things ; and therefore the Holy GHOST urges to them all in one breath, 1 St. Pet. 3. 8. *Be all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as Brethren, be pitiful, be courteous.* And if we must be active in these Christian virtues, then much more in Mercy ; because in us it will proportionably excel other virtues, as much as GOD's

Mercy excels other Attributes in *Him*; and for the same reason. For where Mercy prevails, it sets all other our virtues a work for our *Brethrens* benefit; as divine Mercy which has the ascendant over the other divine Properties engages them all to befriend

C H A P. II.

I. *Wherein* our Mercy is to be express'd. II. In forbearing those that provoke. III. In Forgiving such as offend. IV. In Giving to them that want. V. Hindrances of Mercy to be removed. VI. Particularly Pride. VII. Malice. VIII. And Covetousness.

I. **H**AVING taken a view of GOD's Mercy, and of the Obligations upon *us* to be Merciful as *He* is; we must next consider in what *Instances* we are to be so. For when once we see what we are bound to do, if then we stop in that prospect, and neglect what we know is incumbent upon us; this must be an hainous Sin. Therefore being convinc'd that mercy is our Duty, we are oblig'd to practise it to our power, in the several parts or Scenes of it. And here I might go upon many particulars of Mercy to the *Souls and Bodies* of Men, and be large in discoursing them. For we must be merciful in Instructing the Ignorant, and directing

22 *A Rule for shewing Mercy.* Ch.II.

directing the doubtful; in Comforting those that are cast down, in reducing them that are out of the way, and in Confirming the Fickle and Unresolv'd. In feeding the hungry, in Clothing the Naked, and in visiting and releasing the captiv'd and imprisoned. In helping men to right that suffer wrong, in rescuing them from dangers, in reconciling their enmities, and in making up their differences. In discouraging some and drawing them off from Sin; and in spurring on others to virtue and goodness; and in doing such kind offices to all, as can be any way expressive of Christian Charity.

But to avoid prolixity, I must wave speaking to these, and many other, in which GOD is very merciful to Men; and shall insist only on the Three following.

I. Forbearing those that provoke us.

II. Forgiving such as offend. And

III. Giving to them that want.

First. We must express our Mercy, in Forbearing those that provoke us. The Colossians Col. 3. 12, 13. were commanded (and in them all Profelytes of our LORD) to put on, as the Elect of GOD, bowels of Mercies. And having put on these, wherein were they to be expressed? As it follows,

Ch. II. *A Rule for shewing Mercy.* 23

follows, in *Meekness*, *Long-suffering*, and in *Forbearing one another*. So that a meek and patient Spirit, and mutual Forbearance amongst Christians; are certain Products of a Merciful Temper, in them that are the chosen of GOD. Where-ever that happy Disposition is planted in our Nature, those blessed Fruits will be brought forth, and seen in our life.

And by yielding them duly, we shall come up with an humble Approach to the high Pattern of Mercy; in being merciful as GOD our Father is. For as the first Epithet of His Glorious Name, is *Merciful*, (as above noted:) so the two next are *Gracious* and *Long-suffering*: which plainly shew that His Mercy is attended with great mildness towards us, and with patient Toleration of our Infirmities and Sins. Tho' considering the number and variety of our Offences, and how continu'd and provoking they have been; nothing less than inconceivable Mercy could have borne with us one moment. Yet how many Years does GOD indure the very worst of us, to the astonishment of pious thinking Men; and not only suffers such to live, but crowns them with plenty when they kick against Him? Which extraordinary Clemency of His, as we may greatly Wonder at, so we must no less endeavour to Imitate. And truly His Mar-

lous Example can hardly draw us to any thing more worthy, than to treat ill Men with undeserved Kindness. And therefore to render it the more effectual here, it is backt with express and peremptory commands from His own Mouth, to that purpose. *I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you, St. Matth. 5. 44. If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink, Rom. 12. 20.* Where for farther encouragement to the work, we have the promise of happy success: *for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head.* That is, our mercy shall melt and purifie bad Men (as Fire does hardest metals) into a finer and better Temper. Or if some by their perverseness disappoint our endeavours to do them good; we have reason still to acquiesce contentedly in the Event: For so they deal with the great GOD Himself, Whose Merciful Measures they often defeat, or break in pieces by their froward obstinacy. However we must do our part in the case to work upon them by *forbearance*; and if in the Attempt we succeed not as to them, we may benefit *our selves* by Imitating GOD: Who besides His Pattern, has given us precepts for shewing Mercy to those who will be better'd neither by *His* nor *ours*.

Tho'

Tho' when GOD is so gracious to such as to forbear them *long*, they must not argue from hence that He will *always* do it ; for He has declar'd the contrary. *GOD is angry with the wicked every day ; if he turn not he will whet his sword, Psal. 7. 10, 11.* Because GOD forbears the Impious, they are ready to think He approves of them too : but instead of that, He is angry, and His anger daily increases against them ; so that unless they repent, He'll soon cut them off by a dreadful Execution.

And what His Word threatens, we find sadly exemplif'd, in His Providence. *Israel* was His own indeared People ; yet by continu'd provocations as they came short of His promis'd Favour, so they fell under his high Displeasure. And to that degree, that *He swore in His wrath, that they should not enter into His rest, Psal. 95. 11.* And this, we must remember, happen'd to the *Jews* for an Example to Christians, *1 Cor. 10. 6.* to the intent *We* may do better than *They*. But if we do not, we shall most certainly suffer like them, and our Sins at last will end in our destruction.

But because in GOD there are *riches of forbearance and long-suffering, Rom. 2. 4.* And He is patient to the utmost with Men that provoke

voke Him; *We* must be so too when they affront *us*. So that for small Indignities we must not flame with passion against them, nor fly to Revenge; nor make every *light and trivial* matter an occasion of contest, or of Punishment. And if distast be given by *weightier* things, we must not immediately flush into heats; or if we do, we must be sure to cool and quench them again, before they break out into any thing of Rage, or litigious controversy. For to fly to law Suits for every trifling legal trespass, and to disquiet our selves or Neighbours by avenging petty injuries; shews we are of a contentious humour, and void of that peaceable and forgiving principle, which helps to constitute the *true Christian's* Temper, and to rule His Spirit. If we be such, we shall have regard to that sacred advice, in 1 Cor, 6. 7. and rather *take wrong, and suffer our selves to be defrauded*; than go to Law upon little accounts. Or if the concern be great, and the wrongs we suffer chance to be such as that of necessity they must be righted at last; we must at no rate undertake it our selves, as being too apt to be partial Judges in our own cases. We are then to give way to friendly Arbitrement, or else to appeal to the Judicial Power, by which the Difference, in a course of Law, must be carry'd on to

Ch. II. *A Rule for shewing Mercy.* 27

to final Decision, with fair Procedure: and also with such Sedateness and composure of Mind, as may witness to the World, we were forc'd to that Method.

Directly against this Merciful *Forbearance*, and the practice of it; are vexatious Sutes, Oppressing the Poor, churlish usage of the Fatherless or Widows, and exacting Debts of insolvent Creditors. To which may be added rash Fighting or Duelling upon points of honour; where men shed their blood, or pay down their Life for such poor Trifles, as a mistaken Gesture, a misplac'd Word, or any thing that looks like Reflection or Slight; tho' it really was not such, nor so intended.

III. 2ly. We must express our Mercy in *forgiving such as offend us*. To this we are oblig'd by that Command noted above, as given to the *Colossians*, and must sway us. For by virtue of it, we are to put on bowels of Mercies not only in *Forbearing*, but also in *Forgiving* one another. Such are the Principles of some, and the Tempers of others, and the Infirmities of all with whom we converse; that we have great reason to expect Injuries. But then when they befall us, as 'tis our part to bear them contentedly; so likewise to forgive the doers of them. This kind of Mercy we are to shew *daily* to our Brethren, and *often* in

in a day when there's occasion for it: *If thy brother trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day, turn again to thee, saying I repent; thou shalt forgive him, St. Luke 17. 4.* And this seven times in a day, is extended by another Evangelist, not only to Seventy, but to seventy times seven, St. Mat. 18. 22.

And the oftner we thus express our mercy, the more we shall be merciful as our heavenly Father is; for this Mercy he shews, or is ready to shew, every day times without number, and to degrees above Measure. And happy is it for *us* that He has done thus, and that He will continue to do so still: else where had we been long since? and whether should we go yet at last?

And to induce us here to do like Himself, He hath made *our forgiving others*, the condition of *His forgiving us*, St. Mat. 6. 14, 15. *If ye forgive Men their Trespases, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if ye forgive not Men their Trespases, neither will your Father forgive your Trespases.* How afraid therefore should we be not to forgive offending Men, lest we should bar our selves from pardon? And how willingly should we forgive them all injuries when upon so doing we may the better expect, and shall the sooner obtain remission of our own

Sins?

Ch.II. A Rule for shewing Mercy. 29

ins? Nay, methinks we should be glad, if not greatly rejoyce at opportunities of forgiving *hainous* Offences; that so we may look up with more confidence to GOD, for His pardon of our *biggest* Crimes. For to the singular comfort of such, He has expressly declar'd; that *with the merciful, He will shew Himself Merciful*, 2 Sam. 22. 26.

But we being ty'd to forgive Offenders, under the heavy penalty of not being forgiven our selves: it may be made a question whether we ought to forgive them absolutely and unconditionally, without their asking it? I answer; it is a laudable charity that does so, and I wish all partakers of it; it would be a fair Sign of their aiming at high Perfection in Religion. But Heaven is so far from injoyning it strictly, that it plainly seems to direct otherwise: *If thy brother Trespass against Thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him*, St. Luke 17. 3. And in the next verse, *if seven times in a day he turn again to thee saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him*. So that if the Trespassing Brother repents, or if he asks pardon; we are then bound to forgive him, and as oft as he does it: but if he does not beg pardon for his fault, our LORD does not then require it to be granted.

Nay,

Nay, by Him we are taught to pray, *Forgive us our Trespases, as we forgive them that Trespase against us.* Which implies, that GOD vouchsafes no pardon till we implore it at His Hands. And that being His method, we being to be Merciful as He is; in strictness it may be our Rule: and so in forgiving offenders, we may insist upon the condition of their asking it, without any thing in the least like Bitterness, or Anger.

He therefore that has injur'd his Brother, is bound to ask pardon before he can hope to be forgiven. And this is an act so indispensably needful to the delinquents being accepted of GOD, and to quiet in his own Conscience; that the Service of Heaven must give way to it, *St. Matth. 5. 24.* For there we learn, that if an Offender of his Brother, had brought his Gift to the very Altar; even from thence he must have gone to be reconcil'd to his Brother by craving Pardon; and so first have made his Peace, before he made his Offering. A plain case that Acts of Religion and most solemn Devotions, must yield to the due Acknowledgment of Trespases, and to our suing for their Pardon. Of such mighty importance is that work, as little as the injurious think it, and there-

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Ch. II. *A Rule for shewing Mercy.* 31

fore it behoves them to speed it seriously, and never to rest till it be well finisht.

And *then* the *injur'd* must be as ready to give pardon, as *offenders* to seek it. Tho' they have suffered much from them, and have just and great Complaints against them, they must forgive all as freely and fully as 'tis possible to be done. The Precept directed to Christians at *Coloss* (and made use of before) injoyns no less. *Forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any; even as CHRIST forgave you, so also do ye.* So that tho' we have cause to quarrel with those that have wrong'd us, and have matter of high accusation against them, and can lay very heavy things to their charge: we must still forgive them. And not only so but we must forgive them as **CHRIST** forgave *us*; and so our Forgiveness must be compleat in the perfectest measure or Idea of it.

Not that we are to remit all Injuries neither without Satisfaction where *Damage is great*; for so the Charitable should be undone by their Mercy, and good Laws made in defence of Property, would be useless. But as they are Bulwarks to keep our Rights from invasion; so when Men usurp, or break in upon them, they are likewise to vindicate us from Ineroachments. Then we may make the

the Law our Refuge, and have recourse to it as to a common Patron of the aggriev'd, and the last Remedy for such as sustain losses too great to be borne. Only we must use it with Moderation, and not at all to oppress any, but only to protect or support our selves. And so in the Prosecution great care must be taken, that there be nothing of heat, much less of Revenge, whatever occasions be given for either. For be our Adversaries never so peevish and provoking, yet in all their measures of Malice or Crookedness, we are to forgive *them*, as CHRIST does *us*; which I'm sure we desire should be done entirely. Tho' we sue them therefore for needful Redress, we must pass by or put up their base Unworthiness, whatever it proves. We must never requite their unhandsome Carriage, but instead of retalliating any abuses, for the worst evils they do us, return them the best Good that we can.

And thus legal Controversies manag'd with a calm and Christian Spirit, are very consistent with the highest Charity. So that when we are constrain'd to right our wrongs, and pursue our Dues, to seek amends or sue for restitution; let us do it but according to the Intimations given, and our Procedure must be blameless. Then our Litigations will be in-
offensive

I. Ch. II. *A Rule for shewing Mercy.* 33

offensive to GOD and good men ; and shall break no Rules of Justice or Mercy.

IV. 3ly. We must express our Mercy, *in Giving to them that want.* Tho' we are all made of the same Matter, and consist of the same Nature ; yet we are not plac'd in like Circumstances. For some are set higher, and some lower in the World ; and tho' many be made rich, yet abundance are poor : and with this intention or design of Providence, that the wealthy should still relieve the indigent.

This piece of Mercy Heaven lays upon us, St. *Luke 6. 30. Give to every Man that asketh of thee.* All therefore really and unavoidably poor, are to share in our *Giving* Mercy without exception ; especially if they make their poverty known to us by craving our Alms.

And the more we abound in this Mercy, the more we shall imitate our GOD and Father ; Who gives at ineffable and unmeasurable Rates. For He gives to all, and at all times, and all manner of accommodation ; be their Injoyments never so many, various, and valuable, they are dispens'd to them by *Him* : *He giveth to all life and breath, and all things, Acts 17. 23.*

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But then besides giving our Goods *absolutely*, or wholly, to the poor, we must observe there's a *partial* way of giving them; a giving them with restriction or limitation, as to the bare *use* of them only. This is hinted in the fore-cited Text, St. Luke 6. 30. as a proper and needful branch of *Giving mercy*: *of him that taketh away thy Goods, ask them not again.* The meaning is of him that taketh our Money, or other Goods in * way of *loan*, or *meer use*; we must exact nothing of Interest, if he be a truly poor man. For we must not interpret the place of mens taking away our Goods by *violence*; the word in the original signifying a bare *taking*, and not properly a *taking away*. For when Goods are so taken by force, were not Christians to ask them again, nor to endeavour to resume or recover them; their condition would be too sad, as being expos'd to rapine without Remedy. Therefore the genuine sense of the words must be, that when an indigent

* See Dr. *Hammond's Paraph. and Annot.* on the place, who expounds it to the same Sense; and so falls in with *Grotius*, and other Learned Commentators.

Ch. II. *A Rule for shewing Mercy.* 35

indigent Person taketh any thing of us in the way of *borrowing*; he is to be the sole gainer by it: at least we are to demand nothing for lending it. We are not to challenge any advantage to our selves, but to accommodate him freely without expecting the least requital, or profitable Return. And of this charitable lending, the King of *Israel* speaks *Psal.* 37. 26. where he makes it a piece of the righteous man's Character, that *he is ever merciful and lendeth*. As the Son of *Sirach* makes it a badge; or certain Mark whereby to know the truly merciful, *Ecclus* 29. 1. *He that is merciful will lend unto his neighbour.*

There are Reasons for our *Giving*, and *Lending* thus frankly in that Chapter where the Duty is laid upon us; and being suggested by our SAVIOUR, they must have their weight, and worth enough to be noted.

The 1st is, because *were we poor, we would be so dealt with our selves*. And we ought to treat others, as we would be treated in like circumstances. *As ye would that men should do to you; do ye also to them likewise.* *St. Luke* 6. 31.

36 A Rule for shewing Mercy. Ch. II.

2ly. Because if we do not give and lend freely to the poor, we do but like the common sort of bad Men, and shall be no better approv'd of than they. 'Tis more than probable that we would be thought sincere, if not zealous Christians, and would pass for such in GOD's esteem; but if we fail in this kind of Mercy, we must take our place amongst the *sinfull*, for there our REDEEMER ranks us. If ye do good to them who do good to you (and to no other) what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same. And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again, verse 33, 34.

3dly. Because if we be rightly merciful here, we shall obtain an ample recompence, and exalt our selves to glorious dignity. Our Dignity shall be divine Adoption; and our Recompence that of GOD's Children. Do good, and lend looking for nothing again, and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the highest, v. 35.

V. Having thus remarkt the instances of our Mercy, or the chief Particulars wherein it is to be exprest; the next care must be to remove the *hindrances* of it. For be a work never so excellent in it self, and necessary to be done; yet unhappy obstacles may keep us
from

Ch.II. — *A Rule for shewing Mercy.* 37

from performing it. Now the Impediments here to be taken off, or carefully removed out of our way, are principally *Three* (in answer to the *Three Branches of Mercy* that have been urged) *Pride*, *Malice*, and *Covetousness*.

VI. 1st. We must *put off Pride*. It is an expensive Sin, and where 'tis indulg'd often proves so chargeable, as to disable us to exercise *Giving Mercy*. But then withal I must note, that to *forbearing Mercy* it is an utter Enemy also; for it puts up no Affronts, nor spares any from whom they come. As the proud Man thinks he's too good to be slighted; so when Slights are thrown upon him, he is too big and high to bear them with such Meekness as becomes a Christian, or Disciple of the abus'd and patient JESUS. He's so far from a suffering Temper, and a Mind dispos'd to pass by Indignities; that He's rather fit to Scoff at such Doctrine, and at all who advise him to the Duty. But toleration of coarse and unkind Usages, and of unhandsome and rude Provocations, being a piece of CHRIST's Religion which we profess; and being exempli'd in His Practice which we are to imitate: we can no way be excus'd from it, nor can the want

of it be dispens'd with. We must seek it therefore in all proper Methods, and never rest till in laudable Measures we have attain'd it; And it being so very inconsistent with *Pride*, to make way for it, we must be sure to expel that. Else instead of *forbearing* them that provoke *us*, we shall be ready to give Provocations to *others*; to provoke them daily by haughty disdain, and insolent Carriage which are troublesome things, and full of Offence and Irritation.

VII. 2ly. We must *purge out all Malice*. For as *Pride* can't forbear them that give Affronts, so *Malice* will not forgive the Injurious. Nor need it be wonder'd at, when pardon is the Effect of Kindness; and *Malice* is ever mixt with Cruelty, and naturally prompts to it. *Seneca* speaks its true character, where he says, *that it drinks most of its own Poison, and is worst to them that have it*: yet 'tis exceeding bad to all, and particularly in this, that it forgives none. Now suppose it stopt and terminated here, we might then conclude it fatal to as many as are guilty of it; for if we do not forgive, (as it has been prov'd) we shall never be forgiven: and so we die eternally for lack of that pardon from GOD, which we deny to others.

But then, *Malice* is of a more spreading and diffusive Quality, and runs us upon farther mischiefs;

Ch.II. *A Rule for shewing Mercy.* 39

chiefs; for it fills us with Envy, Anger, and Revenge; and puts us upon all such evil Acts, as a ruling Malignity can exert its rank Venom in. And thus it undoes us doubly, or two ways at once; as it excludes from Mercy, and engages us in Wickedness: the surest Course that can be taken to destroy Souls. Necessity therefore is laid upon us to exterminate Malice, that so we may both forgive others, & keep our selves from Sin; if we would not incur ruin at last.

VIII. 3ly. We must *abandon Covetousness*. Malice does not more contract the Heart, and make us unable to forgive them that offend; than Avarice cramps the Hand, and makes us unwilling to relieve those that want. The Schools reckon Seven Daughters of *Covetousness*, and one of them is an *Heart hardened against Mercy*; we must therefore mortify that Sin, as we would practice the contrary evangelical Virtue.

We know how the Rule of Heaven runs in this case, St. Mat. 5. 7. *Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.* St. Luke 6. 38. *Give and it shall be given unto you*: so that if we would ensure Mercy, and receive it; we must first dispense it by *giving*: for by refusing it to others, we bar our selves from it.

Where is the man that for the whole World would be destitute of GOD's Mercy, and finally cut off from sharing in it? Yet he that gives no

Alms, bids fairly towards excluding himself from that Privilege, *for he shall have Judgment without mercy, that sheweth no mercy, St. James 2. 13.* To avoid which dreadful thing, how should we fly to the exercise of Mercy, and how constant should we be in it according to occasions and our own capacity? But then to make us capable of this, we must renounce *Covetousness*, as repugnant to works of Charity.

C H A P. III.

- I. The proper *Objects* of Mercy, or Christian bounty. II. How it is to be exercis'd. III. Religiously. IV. Chearfully. V. Secretly. VI. With Prudence five ways. VII. And Constancy.

I. **A**S GOD's Mercy, tho' it springs up in Himself, has relation to His Creatures, and is outwardly exhibited to them; so *ours* is so far like to *His*, that the principle of it which dwells within us, reaches to others in its Expressions and Effects.

The *Objects* of it are two,

General. And
More Particular.

The *General Objects* are all *Animals* about us. For besides their Service and Usefulness to us, they being such Creatures as GOD has

has made sensible of ease and pain ; that should bar all Tyranny and Cruelty on our part ; and fill us with pity towards them, with so much at least, as should cause us to lay no Burthens upon them but what they are able to bear ; and to spare their Lives where-ever we can, without danger, or too great trouble to our selves. This, the Holy GHOST fairly points at, where he makes it a piece of the Righteous Man's Character, that he *regardeth the life of his Beast*, Prov. 12. 10. Which he always does so far, as not to destroy it needlessly, or to make the poor Creature weary of it by hard usage.

Life is a thing most precious and valuable, and what Satisfaction the meanest Beings find in it, none can tell. We should never extinguish it therefore lightly and wantonly, much less in way of fury or contempt. We are unable to impart it in any measure ; and therefore it becomes us carefully to preserve it where it may be done without hurt or damage ; and by no means vainly and humorously to take it away. For then we go against that common Mercy, which we owe to all that are GOD's Creatures as much as we ; and are so far of our own rank and Quality, as to be indu'd with Sense, and some of them with

such

Ch. III. *A Rule for shewing Mercy.* 43

Such a sagacity or quickness, as looks a little like Reason.

The *more Particular Objects* of Mercy, are *Mankind*. And accordingly we are directed, *Gal. 6. 10. To do good to all Men*: which is as far as our Charity can go. For *my Goodness extendeth not to Thee*, said the Royal Prophet to GOD, *Psal. 16. 2.* And if all the good things of a *King*, and good Acts of a *Prophet*, could contribute nothing to GOD; how insignificant must our Possessions and Performances be that way? And therefore *Eliphaz* puts the Question, *Job 22. 2. can a Man be profitable to GOD?* And *Elihu* such another, *Job 35. 7. if thou be righteous what givest thou Him? or what receiveth He at thine Hands?* Nothing that we *have*, or *are*, or *can do*, yields the least benefit to the ALMIGHTY.

Nor can we do good to *Angels*. Their condition is Blessed, and their Beatitude so full and high, that 'tis not in our power to improve or raise it. They are invisibly kind, and every day helpful to *us*; but as to advantaging *them*, we are in no capacity.

Nor are we capable of doing good to *Devils*. For tho' their case is so extreamly bad, that there's great need it should be better, yet their Misery is incurable, and they past remedy.

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It remains therefore that we do good to *Men*. And to them we must do good in general, even to all that need and request it: *give to every one that asketh of thee*, St. Luke 6. 30. So that be they good or bad, Friends or Enemies; if their needs be urgent, and they make them known to us, we must look upon them as objects of Charity, and treat them kindly.

But tho' we are to do good to *all*, yet we must distinguish between some and others in the Dispensation of our Charity; as having a divine Rule for it, Gal. 6. 10. *Let us do good unto all Men, especially unto them who are of the Household of Faith*. If they that are indigent believe as we do, and are of the Family of our LORD JESUS, by being Members of His Mystical Body; them we must regard in the first place, and they must share deepest in our Benevolence. Especially if they be related to us, and above all if they be our Parents; for, for this we have direction from above too, 1 Tim. 5. 4. *If any widow have Children, or Nephews, let them learn first to shew piety at home, and to requite their Parents*. Children and Nephews that have poor Parents, must repay their past love and care by making returns of provision for them in their straits; else they fail

in that piety which GOD and Nature oblige them to, and both require at their Hands. And this Rule must reach proportionably to all near Relatives, to all that are of the same House or Family with us; where nothing of Bar is put in against it : and the better and more virtuous they are, the more kind and free we should be to them. And well may they be particular Objects of our Bounty, when all about us, that are Religious and need it, must partake of it.

Yet even amongst those, some will be preferable to others in worth; and so more intitled to our liberality. For the same eminence in Goodness, which sets them higher in GOD's account; renders them more deserving of our kindness, and ties us to afford them it in suitable measures. Especially when besides their virtues and good works, they suffer hard things for the Truth and Righteousness sake. For they that over and above uniform and zealous Obedience, undergo troubles and tortures of Persecution; by choosing to endure loss and pain, rather than make Ship-wrack of Faith and Conscience; do mightily commend themselves to the respect and love of true Christians, and to the best Reliefs that their noblest Charity can minister to them.

It is a glorious Character of the ancient Martyrs which the SPIRIT gives in the 11th of the *Hebrews* ; where He remembers that *they had trials of cruel mockings and Scourgings, and of Bonds and Imprisonments. That they were stoned, sawn asunder, burnt with hot irons ; and that they wandred about in Sheepskins, and Goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented ; of whom the World was not worthy.* So that how despicable soever they might seem in the eyes of Men, they were high in the esteem of GOD, when He pronounc'd so honourably of them. And if any like these should ever come near us, or be recommended to us as objects of Charity ; we could hardly do too generously by them.

Had we seen our dear LORD and SAVIOUR. Who took our mean Nature upon Him and was crucifi'd for us ; in pressing Wants of Food, Raiment, or any necessities : surely we should have done our best to Supply Him with all forwardness. And those I speak of, tho' they be not CHRIST in Person, yet are part of His Mystical Body ; and in their virtues and graces, and temper and carriage, many of His Perfections shaine forth gloriously. Shall we not then do what in us lies to relieve such in their pious needs ? especially when what we bestow upon them

shall

I. Ch. III. *A Rule for shewing Mercy.* 47

shall reach as high as CHRIST Himself? For as when we suffer persecution CHRIST feels it by Sympathy; *Act. 9. 4. Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?* and when we pay Tithes, *Heb. 7. 8.* CHRIST takes them by His Ministers. *He* (according to the Apostle) *receiveth them of whom it is witnessed that He liveth:* so when we give Alms to poor Christians, we do it to CHRIST by His own Interpretation. And so indeed He will declare ere long, with His own Mouth before all the World in these Words; *Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my Brethren, ye have done it unto me.* Which consider'd, who would not do all they can for persecuted Saints, and think all too little, and wish it were more, and grieve that they can't make it so?

These are the Special, or *Particular Objects* of Mercy. *Men, Christians, and the Best of them,* in circumstances of Distress.

II. But as Mercy is a great and necessary work; so like other works of that Nature and Importance, it must be done regularly, in a right way, or due method. Otherwise ill Management may frustrate the performance; and so in largest gifts there may be no Mercy, and our costliest Alms may

may be void of Charity. The consequence of which will be, that the work defective in itself, must come short of its end ; and as GOD shall have no Honour, so we shall reap no Benefit by it. That what we do this way therefore may be of good use , and at once conducive to GOD's Glory , and our own Advantage ; we must dispense our Mercy according to the following Rules or Measures.

III. First, we must do it *Religiously*. In love to GOD, that is, and those who need it ; for if it proceeds not from that Principle, it will be of no worth, nor can it yield any Spiritual Fruit. The Assertion is not more positive than true, as being supported by divine Authority ; *tho' I give all my goods to feed the Poor ; and tho' I give my Body to be burned, and have not charity ; it profiteth me nothing, 1 Cor. 13. 3.* As to give away all is the top of bounty ; so to undergo a violent tormenting Death, is the utmost effort of Zeal and Courage. Yet he that does and suffers thus, for the benefit of any without true Charity moving him to it, is sure to receive no advantage thereby. 'Tis that which must dignify our acts of Mercy, and make them of such value as to be rewardable in Heaven's account. Were we mighty Emperors and could we give rich Kingdoms to the Poor

Ch.III. A Rule for shewing Mercy. 49

Poor ; we must then expect no recompence but upon religious Considerations. Tho' if to a Disciple, in the name of a Disciple, that is, under the notion of His being CHRIST's profelyte) we give never so little, *but a cup of cold water ; we shall in no wise lose our reward,* St. Mat. 10. 42. Whether therefore we give little or much , we must do it religiously, with love to GOD and intention to please Him ; and with pity to the necessitous and desire to succour them.

IV. Secondly, to Religion here, we must add *Chearfulness*.

We must distribute our Alms not only with a willing Mind , and a ready Hand, but with a pleasing Aspect ; a great part of Mercy lying in our Eyes. For a kind look of the rich comforts the Poor , when they are about to relieve them ; whereas to frown upon them then , or deny them countenance , is to overcast and cloud our Charity.

Besides ; Where we give with Sowness, or Moroseness , in all likelihood reluctance and lothness attend the act ; and then tho' we give never so much we miss of GOD's acceptance. For as He requires them that shew Mercy, *to do it with Chearfulness,* Rom. 12. 8. so He declares that He loveth

E

loveth a chearful Giver, 2 Cor. 9. 7. And accordingly the Son of Sirach directs, *in all thy gifts shew a chearful Countenance*, Eccles 35. 9. Part with nothing therefore grudgingly, or of necessity (as the Apostle there directs) lest we utterly lose it: for then it will be a gift without benevolence, a favour without kindness on our part; and so GOD will as little approve, as we do rightly dispense it.

Let us always give with a ready mind then, as the Apostle 2 Cor. 8. 19. speaks in commendation of the *Corinthians Charity*; if we would have it turn to Account. For 'tis the Donour's *Heart* that GOD looks at, or his *Disposition*; and if that be defective, or out of frame, it marrs his Benevolence how commendable soever. And too often Backwardness in the Giver's Heart, breaks out unhandsomely, and shews its self at his Lips; while he pours out rugged checks, and mingles churlish reproofs with his gratuities. A piece of carriage to be carefully avoided, as being very incongruous, as well as indecent in the charitable Man; especially when he is actually dealing out his Kindness. For the design of that, is to refresh the Poor receivers, and make them more easy. But when he mixes his Alms

with

Ch. III. *A Rule for shewing Mercy.* 51

with harsh Reflections, these may more afflict and despise, than the other can revive them. No Invectives therefore should accompany our Alms-deeds, lest they imbit-ter them. But if they we give to, need re-proofs as well as Sustenance, we must bestow them mildly; and so perhaps there can be no better juncture for serious Reprimands. For then we may reach the Parties Minds thro' their Bodies, and by cherishing the one, may work the more effectually upon the other. But whether we admonish, or reprehend, let what we utter be soft and gentle, that so it may penetrate kindly, and be sweetly impressiv. And truly should we chafe and kindle into heats against the Poor when we relieve them; our Passion, must rudely intrench upon that cheerfulness which is then to actuate us; and so the fault in our temper would make a flaw in our Charity.

When the heedless Judge would not right the poor Widow's cause; by daily complaints he vanquish't his patience, and constrain'd him to do her Justice, that she might no longer disturb his quiet with tiresome Applications. And if we be kind as he was just, meerly to get rid of importunate Beggars, that weary us with their Addresses and

52 *A Rule for shewing Mercy.* Ch. III.

Obsecrations; with sad tones and an hideous Oratory : here will be little Mercy shew'd but to our selves. What is given in such a case, will be matter of Extortion in the Poor; rather than of Charity in the Rich : and so it must be where compulsion rules our bounty, instead of Chearfulness.

Too many of us often cast a causeless damp upon this Chearfulness ; when by wrong thoughts we discourage our selves ; or by untoward suggestions dishearten others from Acts of Mercy. That is, when we surmise, or argue, that charitable Collections to be made by Royal Authority, for poor Sufferers ; are not intended for them, or come not to their hands : but are politick contrivances of the State, or Arts of particular Men, to cheat us of our Money. And however these may pass for light and trivial things, yet where they prevail, they'll prove of heavy consequence. For then we injure the needy, libel Governors, traduce our Superiors, and draw down a complicated guilt upon our selves, for which we must answer another day.

V. Thirdly, our Charity must be order'd and carry'd on *Secretly*. So we are taught by our great Master, *St. Mat. 6. 3, 4.* *When thou doest Alms, let not thy left hand know*

what

Ch. III. A Rule for shewing Mercy. 53

what thy right-hand doth; that thine Alms may be in secret. That is, we must not publish our Alms to notify them to others, or gain applause to our selves. So our LORD who gave out the Rule, and best understood it, expounds it in the context; *Take heed, that ye do not your Alms before Men, to take secret of them.* We are not to make a show of them, or to dispense them in a pompous and vain-glorious way to hunt for a Name, or popular praise; that is the meaning of the Words, as may be gathered from the Scope of them. For they were levelled against the *Pharisees*, whose practice in this matter was notoriously culpable, as appears in the cited Chapter. Where we find that they did not only give Alms in the open Streets, and in places of greatest concourse; but that they used to sound a Trumpet at their distribution, to call in Multitudes to behold them. Such a theatrical way of giving Alms, with set Proclamings, and solemn studied Ostentation of them; our REDEEMER forbids, and we must avoid. But He is not so strict as to injoin perpetual Hiding them; that would thwart another Rule from His own sacred Mouth, in the same Heaveuly discourse. *St. Mat. 5. 16. Let your light so shine before Men, that they may see your good works, and glorifie your Father who is*

54 *A Rule for shewing Mercy.* Ch.III.

²*n Heaven.* Good works (of which Alms-deeds are an eminent sort) are a *Light*, says the SON of GOD. Not to be put under a Bushel, so as never to be seen ; but to shine sometimes in the Eyes of Men, and to a good and great End, that they may Glorifie GOD in a double Capacity. Not only for His Grace inabling themselves to do such good works : but by inducing others to imitate them by their bright Examples. And therefore by doing Alms in Secret, is not meant doing them quite out of Sight, or a perfect covering them from all notice ; for then they could not be *seen of Men*. Nor indeed is such a clandestine, or private doing of good works generally practicable ; inasmuch as many of them shew themselves by inevitable indications. Thus, it is not possible to build a Church, or found a Colledge, or to erect and endow a School, or Hospital, and the things and doers of them, not be known : such benefactions proclaim themselves, and their Authors too, Yet they are not only Instances, but signal Expressions of a noble Charity ; of such a Charity as can flow from none but the truly great. I mean, from Persons of great Minds as well as great Fortunes ; whose generous Spirits love to do Acts of heroick Kindness, and to

Ch. III. A Rule for shewing Mercy. 55

to oblige Posterity with a lasting Munificence.

But tho' we are not bound to conceal our Charity wholly, and at all times; yet in some cases 'tis needful to be done: chiefly in these Two.

I. When we are enclining to vain-glory.

II. When we relieve the Bashful,

1st. When we incline to vain-glory. When we are apt to pride our selves in our Charity, and to swell or be puff'd up with conceit of it. Here we must veil what we do of that Nature, or act it in as close a manner as we can. Else in Effect we set a Trap, and lay a dangerous Snare for our own Souls.

2ly. When the Persons we relieve are bashful and Modest. When they are afraid or ashamed to have their Wants Discovered. Then we are to favour them with private Supplies; in case we do not, the World's Notice may deject them more, than what we give may benefit them.

In these two circumstances at least, our Charity must be Secret; to prevent Arrogance in our selves; and to support those who having a quick Sense of their Straits,

are fit to droop under the pressures of a known Poverty, and to be over-set therewith.

But by no means let us so affect Secrecy, as to be afraid or ashamed to give openly, when we meet with fit objects, or occasions for it. I here insert this Caution, because I have known excess of Modesty sometimes hinder works of Mercy; which it can hardly do without a fault.

VI. In the Fourth Place our Charity must be exercis'd with *Prudence*. And here solid Wisdom will dictate several Rules, as proper and needful to be observ'd. I mention but five. As,

1st. We must do it *Honestly*, giving what's our own. Otherwise what we call Alms, GOD will count Theft; because in His sight we plainly rob one to pay another. Where debts are great therefore, Alms must be small, lest by shewing Mercy, we be guilty of Injustice, in parting with anothers Right which we have no power to dispose of. For so by a formal, but fictitious Charity, we may lay our selves open to Judgments here, and vengeance at last.

We must be careful also that our Charity issues not from unjust Gains, nor from any funds that we raise by our Sins. The Hire

a of a Whore might not be brought into the
re- House of the LORD, *Deut.* 23. 18. And
to put the price of blood into the holy
ry, Treasury, was pronounc'd unlawful, *St. Mat.*
ly, 27. 6. And a like parity of reason there is
ons why our Alms which are Sacrifices, or Ob-
use lations to GOD, should not consist of un-
nes lawful Gettings; because as they are Fruits
rd- and Products of moral filthiness; so a great
deal of baseness cleaveth to them, as they
ity were occasions of it.

ere IIldly. We must give *Speedily*. As expedi-
as tion is laudable in secular; so it is in reli-
ion gious Concerns; and if it be needful in ci-
vil, then much more in sacred Affairs. Nor
ing are we ty'd to it more expressly in any other
call holy Duties, than in bestowing our Charity:
in for whatever liberty of Slackness we assume
no- to our selves, none at all is allow'd us;
lms we being strictly limited to quick Dispatch,
e be and permitted no manner of procrastination.
hers Say *not to thy neighbour, go, and come again*
pose *to morrow, and I will give; when thou hast it*
ari- *by thee, Prov.* 3. 28. Such an enemy is GOD
ents to delay here, that He charges us not to de-
fer one day. And we had need lay hold
rity of the present opportunity, and not carelessly
any omit it: for if we do by some sudden and
fire finister

finister Accident or other our Charity may be obstructed, and made for ever impracticable.

Thus, Objects of Charity *may be remov'd from us*, and tho' now they are near us, they may quickly be set at a great distance. GOD may send them far off us on Earth; or by taking them to himself, may supply their wants with the fulness of Heaven.

Or if they remain with us, *we may be disabl'd to relieve them*. For the World is transient, and Riches are incertain; *Prov. 23. 5. they make themselves Wings, and fly away as an Eagle towards Heaven*. And how soon they may take their farewell flight, conveying themselves wholly out of our Possession; we cannot tell.

Or if our Wealth continues, *our selves may fail*. For we are mortal and must die, and death may snatch us immediately from hence. But whenever it does so, our Charity unperform'd is finally prevented; and all opportunities of our doing good are past for ever.

Or lastly. Where People are very Poor, and we put off relieving them for any time, *they may perish in the interval for want of Succour*. And then how shall we be able to look them in the Face in the other World, when there

here it shall be sadly laid to our Charge, that we starved their Souls out of their Bodies, by not affording them timely sustenance ?

Upon these, and such Considerations, we should speed our works of Mercy. And if sometimes we catch at occasions as soon as offer'd ; or seek them before they are presented to us ; and so anticipate the Craving of the honest Poor : such a Merciful forwardness in many cases, will deserve commendation as well as reward.

'Tis a common Saying, and there is truth in it ; *he gives twice, that gives quickly* : we should hasten our Alms therefore that we may double them.

And certainly 'tis wise, and so very advisable, not to defer our whole Charity till death. For then we must trust others with its Settlement, or distribution ; which too often proves unhappy ; because so many times, the Right of the Poor is made an Executor's Prey ; and a corrupt hand defeats the intention of a generous Mind. Whereas he that divides his Alms amongst the Needy Himself, by that Expedient effectually precludes this Fraud. He's sure the necessitous shall have what He gives, who in His life time is his own Almoner.

Illdly.

Illdly. We must *apportion our Alms to the Receivers wants.* We are not to give them *more than they need;* for so we dispose them to Idleness and Extravagancies: and then as some go away with more than they should, so by that means, others must be put off with less than they ought.

Nor must we give them *less than they need* for then we shall not only pinch *them*, but thereby may pull down want upon *our selves* *there is that with-holdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty, Prov. ix. 24.* And that we may ever be ready to relieve the indigent, and to afford them suitable Supplies, we should always have a stock by us devoted to that use. And to maintain that Sacred Fund, it will be proper weekly to lay by somewhat of our income, or our gains, in such reasonable proportions as we shall think fit. So we shall come up to the Apostle's method for succouring distressed Christians of old; where he gave this order to the *Corinthian* and *Galatian* Churches. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store as GOD hath prospered him.

And that here we may order things the better, we must labour to inform our selves touching Mens Poverty, if it be real and inevitable, and not rather dissembled, or self-procur'd

Ch. III. *A Rule for shewing Mercy.* 61

procur'd. For if they be Poor thro' profuseness, or Sloth; because they will not be frugal, or will not work; and yet are capable of one, or both: we are not bound to give them so much as bread, so long as they can save or earn it; *if any will not work, neither let him eat*, says GOD Himself, *2 Thess. 3. 10.*

But to them that ask because they need, and need because their care and industry can't bring them in meet Supplies; to them we must be kind: and according as their wants are more urgent and pressing, we must be the more liberal to them. We must always take care that they have most, who most need it; and upon account of their different wants we shall often find, that when a Shilling is too much for some, a Pound may not be enough for others.

Particular regard also must be had to the Qualities and Conditions of the Indigent. For their circumstances may much aggravate their wants, and double their hardship to that of other mens. Upon which account decay'd *Gentlemen* never us'd to toil and take pains; must have a tender respect shew'd them. And so must *young Children* that can't labour; and the *old and infirm* when their work is done, especially if they were industrious in the time of strength. Also the *sickly* in body, and the *weak* in Mind, that know
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not how to shift: and House-keepers *burthen'd* with Children, or *overcharg'd* with Nephews, or that have decrepit Parents to maintain. *Strangers* likewise distress'd in a foreign Country; *Soldiers* worn out, or maimed in War; and People *undone* by fire, floods, or any sad Misfortunes, are mightily to be pitied. As such as these are reduc'd to hardest Measures, and feel the heaviest weight of adversity; so in our Mercy they should find a suitable preference.

IVly. Our Alms must *have respect to the Receivers Merits*. And so they must have most that *deserve* best; for as universal Charity becomes a Christian, so he must extend it chiefly to the pious: we must do good to all Men, but especially to them of the household of Faith. And here again, we shall do but like the Great GOD Himself, Who is the main Exemplar and Rule, as well, as the Source of all Mercy: for He shews most favour to the Religious. And as the Religious who are most pure in themselves and upright in their ways, are the principal objects of His mercy; so they must be of ours. Yet sometimes *ill men* in *extream want*, must have a larger Portion of our Charity, than the truly good. For tho' the Religious carry it in point of deserts, yet the heavy needs of the other, may cast the

Scale of kindness on their sides, as to their present Exigencies.

Now amongst Persons to be favour'd upon account of Religion. Two Sorts seem most deserving.

1st. *They that adhere to it in Sufferings, and prefer Religion before all other Interests.* That refuse to part with Relations, Friends, Country, Possessions, and all that is dear to them upon Earth; rather than desert and give up what. These have been already pointed

2ly. *They that are in the Ministry of Religion, and labour conscientiously in the same.* Spiritual Persons that have Cure of Souls, and therefore need Maintenance want necessary Provisions. And yet which is hard, and exceeding pitiable, they have neither *time*, nor *liberty by Law*, to make provisions for themselves and Families as other Men may do, these therefore must be intreated to the fairest Charity we can afford; and for such we should strain to do our best, considering the noble tendency of our bounty. For by aiding them in their straits we may help to promote GOD's Truth and Righteousness; and advance the Honour and Interests of Heaven: they that encourage Agents, and make Instruments more fit for an excellent work; by so doing

ing facilitate and forward the good work it self.

I only add, that to such as are dispos'd to turn their Charity this way, there is a very useful and unexceptionable Fund into which they may throw it; the *Corporation* for relief of the poor Clergy lately settled by the Queens Majesty. And such another She was pleas'd to establish by Her Royal Charter, in the hands of prudent and pious Managers for *propagating* the *Gospel* in foreign Countries. So that they who affect by their generous assistance to promote such noble works of a publick and spiritual Nature; rather than dispense it to private Persons, and lower uses; may here bestow their Bounty without all suspicion of having it perverted, or misapply'd.

Vly. We must *sute our Alms to our own Abilities*. For this we have a worthy Pattern, *Act. 11. 29, 30. The disciples every one according to his abilitie determined to send relief unto the Brethren who dwelt in Judea. Which also they did, and sent it to the Elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.* Agreeable to this Rule is that of *Tobit, be merciful after thy power: if thou hast much, give plentifully; if little, do thy diligence to give of that little.*

With

Ch. III. A Rule for shewing Mercy. 85

With which the counsel of another wise man falls in exactly. *Give unto the most High, according as He hath enriched thee; and as thou hast gotten give with a chearful eye, Ecclus 35. 10.*

Only remember, that they who (keeping to wise measures) give most freely; shall also be most liberally rewarded. For speaking of Alms-deeds, the H. SPIRIT declares, that *he who soweth sparingly, shall reap sparingly; and he who soweth bountifully, shall reap bountifully, 2 Cor. 9. 6.* And since the Harvest of recompence shall so answer to the Seed of Charity; it will be wisdom not to grutch our Seed, because thereby we shall hinder our Crop. Too much frugality here must be very preposterous, and can no where turn more to our prejudice. For over-sparingness will diminish our Beatitude; and so prove a most injurious Parsimony.

When the great Day of Retribution comes, every one will be for the fairest Recompence: the richest Robe, and brightest Crown, and highest Throne will then be most acceptable. But at that day, as all shall be rewarded according to their works; so our present Bounty shall particularly be the measure of our future Glory. So that upon the whole matter, they must be wisest who give most, because

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that

66 *A Rule for shewing Mercy.* Ch.III.

that ensures amplest Remunerations in the Eternal World.

Should any inquire *at what Rate* we must give, or in what Proportion Alms are to issue out of our Estates: I answer, Here especially *Prudence* is to rule, and every mans Discretion must guide and govern him in his proper circumstances. As he best knows his own Income and Expences, so he is best able to regulate his Alms; and to chuse and appoint to what degree they shall flow, in what Channels they shall run, and how long they shall continue. In these Particularities all Christians are to judge and manage for themselves, and must be left to their own conduct.

Yet as to Alms in general they may thus be measur'd, or set out. *We are to allow at least the Thirtieth part of our Estates to pious Uses.* This is inferr'd from the divine Imposition upon the *Jews*, when GOD made it a law to them that their *third years Tithes* should go to the Poor, *Deut.* 14. 28, 29. which was all one with the *thirtieth part* of their whole products or profits. But then we Christians sharing much deeper in Heaven's Mercy than *they*; have great Reason to be as much more Charitable.

Tho'

Ch. III. *A Rule for shewing Mercy.* 67

Tho' how far *our* Alms are to be enlarg'd upon this account beyond theirs, we must well consider, and for our selves every one of us must conclude. And as in this matter our personal Quality, Family, and Domestick circumstances are to be consider'd; so great regard is to be had to Heaven's special favours, and the particular Obligations it lays upon us in our respective Capacities.

And I nothing doubt, but that upon due recollection, all of us may call to Mind some signal Blessings from above, which tie us to the utmost Liberality we can use: and may fairly put us upon that extensive Mercy which the Gospel requires; where it directs, *he that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise, St. Luke 3. 11.*

The *last* Rule for Mercy is, we must exercise it *Constantly*. No time for that must be lost by us, or ever let slip; as oft as we have occasion we must lay fast hold of it: *as we have opportunity let us do good, Gal. 6. 10.* GOD is here made our president, and so our Mercy in its *duration*, as far as it can must come up to His; and be of the longest continuance it can reach to, because His is everlasting. And indeed the perpetuity of *His* Mercy is *our* happiness; were

68 *A Rule for shewing Mercy.* Ch.III.

it not for that, how sad would our condition be? For were His Mercy only for to day, when we need it to Morrow; or only for this Year, when we need it the next; or only while we live, when we shall want it both when we dye, and after we are dead: what would become of us? and where should we have our portion for ever? But therefore for our comfort His Mercy flows with an eternal stream, and yields Refreshments to all worthy of them. And GOD's Mercy being so permanent, and ours being to imitate *His*; because *His* will never fail while He exists, *ours* must be active so long as we live.

C H A P.

C H A P. IV.

- I. *Motives to Mercy from the Work it self.* II. *It is Necessary.* III. *Noble.* IV. *And Pleasing.*

I. **I** Am now come to the last part of this Subject. To offer, that is, some plain *Motives* to excite and induce to the exercise of Mercy.

They shall be drawn from *Four Topicks*, or Heads.

- I. From Mercy it self.
II. From GOD.
III. From Men.
IV. From Advantages it brings.

First. *From Mercy it self.* And here the Qualities or Properties of it must be consider'd as meet Incentives.

70 *A Rule for shewing Mercy.* Ch.IV.

II. 1st. It is a necessary Duty. As indispensably necessary as divine Precept can make it; and scarce any piece of religious Practice is more frequently and peremptorily urg'd by express commands in the sacred Books. * *Give to Him that asketh.* † *Give to the Poor.* || *Give Alms of such things as ye have.* * *Charge them who are rich in this World, that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate.* And if after these Commands, and many more as forcible laid upon us to be merciful; we either refuse or neglect to be so: we run counter to the Will of GOD most plainly declared, and trample upon His Law which He has made our Rule. It is as necessary therefore to be merciful to Men, as it is for us to be obedient to Him.

Which consider'd we should be very careful of ever slighting any objects of Mercy that occur; for tho' so we may save a little expence, yet at the same time we must turn our Backs upon many divine Commands at once, and thereby contract a most perilous Guilt.

III.

* St. Mat. 5. 42. † St. Mat. 19. 21. || St. Luke 11. 41. I Tim. 6. 17, 18.

Ch. IV. *A Rule for shewing Mercy.* 71

III. 2ly. It is a *Noble Duty*. As it is exerted in generous Acts, so it dignifies us with a divine Impress, stamping the Likeness of GOD upon us. And as one reason why He enjoyns us to be Merciful, is that we might be conformable to Himself; so the same reason should draw us powerfully to the work, because it is so innobling. For what higher Prerogative can we aim at, than resemblance of the DEITY? and in what more glorious Perfection than Mercy can we bear its Similitude? As many therefore as are divinely ambitious, and would rise high in celestial Honour, must ascend to it by the way of Mercy. For as that is a great ornament as well as virtue in Men; so the Mercy of GOD will give the beautifullest Crown to them that best imitate it. Such as do that, shall not only shine in this lower state, but be inrob'd for ever with brightest Splendors in the Regions above.

Nay, Charity it self will then (in the root or principle of it) adorn us, and be a mark of great and endless Glory upon us. For when other Spiritual Graces as well as *Gifts* shall fail, and *Faith*, and *Hope* amongst the rest (the first being turn'd into blessed *Vision*, and the second into like *Injoyment*) then shall *Charity* continue and flourish most. And therefore, the Apostle tiles it the *greatest* of the Graces, 1 Cor. 13.

ult. because it surmounts them in this point of Nobleness, *perpetual Duration*. For in Heaven it self it shall never be antiquated or out of date, but shall there shine out as the Sun at Noon, and make us always do so too.

And then, besides adding to our Glory, it will be a chief Ingredient in our Felicity. For what greater happiness can there be, then loving GOD, and all whom He loves incessantly, and for ever. As this farther innobles Charity, so it still recommends it more forcibly to our Practice.

IV. 3ly. It is *a pleasing Duty*. And that on all hands; to the Actors, to the Objects of it, and to GOD Himself.

To the *Actors*. For besides the great Satisfaction they find in obeying GOD's Will, and in conforming to Himself: they feel other high contentments and delight, as they do good to those of the same Nature with themselves. As cruelty and oppression burthen the Conscience, and lay an heavy load upon the Spirit: as they startle and sting us with terrifying horrors, and sad resentments; so Mercy expresses to them that need it, kindles silent Joys within us, and affects us with so sweet tho' secret Gratisfications, as are better felt, than they can be describ'd.

Ch.IV. *A Rule for shewing Mercy.* 73

To the *Objects* of it also Mercy is pleasing. Nor can it be otherwise when its Dispensations terminate in them, and turn to their benefit. When the Hungry are fed, the Naked cloathed, the Sick comforted, and Prisoners freed. These are favours that carry Refreshments along with them: Such grateful Reliefs, that they who share in them and perceive no Pleasure; must want their Senses.

And then it is pleasing to GOD likewise. No Duty (as was said even now) is more inculcated in the holy Volume, than this. But then what GOD so earnestly requires us to do, He must needs be much pleas'd with when it is done. And ought we not to do what in us lies to please GOD?

He is *our* GOD, and we are *His* Creatures; and that's enough to make us most obsequious to Him. But then we are *His* in nearer Relations too; His redeemed People, and his devoted Servants. And which is more yet, we pretend and profess ourselves truly regenerate, and His adopted Children; and is it not then our Duty to please Him?

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We have displeas'd Him much and often, by our backwardness to Duties, and remissness in them. Nay, in this very case we have done it too frequently; and shall we do so still, and go on farther in the offensive Neglect?

Is it not our Interest to please GOD? and will it not conduce to our final Happiness? Can we possibly please a better than He, or have we reason to please any one so well? Let these considerations incline us to the work, and make us persist faithfully in it; that GOD may be delighted with us; and our Proceedings.

By this Argument St. Paul would persuade Men to works of Mercy, *Heb. 13. 16. To do good and to communicate forget not, for with such sacrifices GOD is well pleased.* Works of Mercy are *Sacrifices* to the ALMIGHTY. Such things as He not only permits and enjoins us to do, or as He approves and accepts when done; but such as the doing of is hugely pleasing and satisfactory to Him: just as the appointed Offices were under the *Jewish* Polity, and *Levitical* Priesthood; from which He is often said to smell a sweet Savour.

And

V. Ch. IV. *A Rule for shewing Mercy.* 75

And that Alms-deeds are preferable to legal Sacrifices in GOD's account, and more pleasing to Him; we learn from authentic information, *Mic. 6. 7, 8. Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of Rams, or with ten thousands of Rivers of Oil? shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee? but to do justly, and to love Mercy, and to walk humbly with thy GOD.* Which emphatical Passage makes it manifest, that moral, or divine Goodness is the great thing which GOD recommends, and would fain teach us. And that amongst other branches of that Goodness, *Mercy* springing up from love or the root of Charity; is more pleasing to Him than richest Oblations. Should they consist of vastest Flocks, of Torrents of Oil, or of our own dearest Children; they would be nothing comparable to *Mercy* in His sight. And therefore whatever Victims stand in its way, by GOD's own order they must be put aside, and give place to *Mercy* as less valuable than that: *I will have Mercy and not Sacrifice, St. Mat. 9. 13.*

We therefore that have often grieved GOD, how very Charitable should we now be? that in way of reprisal upon our selves, and of Holy

ly amends to Him; we might surely do what He best accepts. On our vanities perhaps we have bestow'd great cost, and to please our selves have been expensive in our Sins: how willingly then, out of Mercy to the Poor, should we part with as much as we can well spare; to please our GOD.

C H A P

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CHAP. V.

- I. *Motives* to Mercy taken from GOD. II. He Gives us an *Example* of it. III. He will *requite* our Mercy. IV. He hath made us the great *Objects* of Mercy from Himself.

AS Mercy is a Perfection essential to GOD, so he continually expresses it with amazing Freeness. And the reason why He exhibits it so liberally, is, because the root of it is in Himself. For being naturally in His Essence, from thence it will most freely flow to all that are capable of receiving it. Even as freely as light does from the Sun, or Water from a Fountain, or Wickedness from the worst of Men. And 'tis happy for us that it does so; for to its exuberance we owe our continuance here, with the present Blessings that

surround us ; as well as all our future Expectancies. For tho' GOD's Mercy be immense, yet were it confin'd to His own Being, it would be but as a sealed Fountain to *us*, and we should perish for ever for want of its blessed communications. But now that it runs out into such as are receptive of it, and favours them with free impartures of it self; not only our injoyments in this life, but the Felicities we hope for in the other, are all Effluxes of this diffusive Property. But then here's a new Argument to persuade to Charity.

II. I mean, *GOD's Example*; which far exceeds both expression and thoughts. For besides innumerable Good things which He now vouchsafes us, He has promis'd us eternal ones to come. And when GOD who *hath* given and *does* give us at such a rate; *will always* do it above what we can speak or think: so glorious a Pattern set before us, should inflame us to zealous Imitation.

As one proof of His Exemplary Mercy, He gave *His only Son for the World*, St. John 3. 16. And the SON being in *Mercy* (as in other Perfections) the express Image of His FATHER; joyn'd with Him in that compassion, and gave *Himself*. So we are told by an inspir'd Writer, Tit. 2. 14. *Who gave Himself for us that He might Redeem us.* And when the eternal SON

of that GOD who is the Father of Mercies, concurr'd with Him in this Act of signal kindness, and even dy'd ignominiously for our Redemption, ought not our practice as to Mercy to be over-rul'd by so illustrious a President? Especially when it stands recommended to us in the divine Oracles, on purpose that it might here influence and govern us. *For ye know the grace of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, that tho' He was rich, yet for our sakes He became Poor, that ye thro' His Poverty might become rich, 2 Cor. 8. 9.* None were ever so rich as our SAVIOUR in the Glories of Heaven; but upon Earth who was poorer in condition than He? Yet of one so rich He became so poor, that we might be enriched by the change He suffer'd. What shall ever win us to Charity, if this Dispensation and this stupendous Example fail? For here we see GOD Merciful to Men, even to astonishing Diminution of Himself: and if that will not bring us to a liberal Mind, and incline us to Alms and such Benefactions as are in our power; what more cogent Arguments can be us'd? Yet let us go on to another.

III. *GOD will requite the Mercy we shew.* Whatever we do in obedience to His Will, and to advance His Honour; He will assuredly turn to our Advantage. *GOD is not unrighteous, to forget your work and labour of love, Heb. 6. 10.* If upon His account we be at the least trouble
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or expence; He can no more forget, or omit rewarding it; than He can be guilty of downright Injustice. And because GOD compensates whatever we lay out in way of Charity, all that we so expend is said to be lent Him: *he that giveth to the Poor, lendeth to the LORD, and that which He hath given shall he pay him again, Prov. 15. 17.* And very often He pays Men in Kind, vouchsafing them a competent, if not an eminent outward Prosperity. The bread which they cast upon the Waters, He causeth to be found after many days; and their charitable Scatterings He turns to Increase. We learn as much from what dropt from a great Writer's Pen, *Ecclus 35. 11. The LORD recompenceth, and will give thee seven times as much.*

Too many think that what they give away is lost; but that's a wrong Notion of Alms, which on the other side we are to count laid up, as *Alphonsus the Sicilian King* reckon'd them. For being askt when he parted with many things, what he would keep for himself; he answered rightly, *those things which I give*: and added (as properly) *the rest are none of mine.* And truly things that are piously given, are best secured; nay, they are not only well repositied, but shall improve. For the Mercy we exercise will multiply upon us, and crown us with the more eternal Happiness. Therefore said our LORD

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Ch. V. *A Rule for shewing Mercy.* 81

give, and it shall be given to you, St. Luke 6. 38. To which agrees Solomon's assertion, *he that giveth unto the Poor shall not lack*, Prov. 28. 27. Nor was the good man out in his advice, when he wisht People to give abundance of Alms, because *so they should lay up treasure for themselves against the day of adversity*, Tob. 4. 8, 9. The Preacher also spake to this purpose, Eccles. 11. 2. *Give a portion to seven, and also to eight; for thou knowest not what evil shall come upon the Earth.* Intimating, that if evil times or evil things should happen when, or where we live; the works of Mercy would then stand us in singular stead, and some way or other be beneficial to us. Nay, by giving freely to many, perhaps we may raise up some to relieve our selves, in case of future declensions and adversities. And then while we find the more hands returning our old kindness when we greatly want it, we shall so very happily reap fruits springing up from those whom we water'd with the showres of our own Liberality. Or if none should be inabl'd by what we bestow to requite our bounty when we need it; yet we having been charitable to them, upon their account (as occasion requires) GOD would favour us, He would supply our wants, or secure us from Dangers, or defend us from Enemies. Which made the Son of Sirach thus declare and direct; *Lay up thy treasure according*

82 A Rule for shewing Mercy. Ch. V.

according to the commandments of the MOST
HIGH, and it shall bring thee more profit than
Gold. Shut up alms in thy store-houses, and it
shall deliver thee from all affliction. It shall fight
for thee against thine Enemies, better than a migh-
ty shield, and a strong spear, Eccles. 29. 11, 12,
13.

So that if we love our selves, and our own
Interests, this again should invite us to Mercy;
to think how abundantly GOD will requite it.
To be safe and easy, or to rise and flourish in the
World; is the end of most Men's care and tra-
vel. For this some fight in bloody Wars, and
others Sail thro' dangerous Seas: some rack their
minds with Study, and others with labour waste
their Bodies. But lo here a most sure, and yet
a more easie and compendious way! *Be merciful
to the Poor.* Then if it be best you shall thrive
and prosper; or GOD will requite your religi-
ous bounty with better things: as with con-
tent of Mind, chearfulness of Spirit, or the
light and sense of His sweet Countenance and
Love.

Nor does the *Requital* of the Merciful, stop
and end here, but goes farther, and reaches
higher, and is made to them chiefly in the
next state; where it grows up into rest, and
peace, and the Joys of a divine and endless Life.
And therefore good Men that give Alms, are

said

Ch. V. *A Rule for shewing Mercy.* 83

said to provide themselves bags that wax not old, and a treasure in the Heavens, St. Luke 12. 36. and our Blessed LORD left us it in charge, St. Luke 16. 9. to make unto our selves friends of the Mammon of unrighteousness, that when we fail, they may receive us into everlasting Habitations. So that by being charitable in our Life-time, we secure to our selves reception into Heaven, when we dye; where as we meet with precious enjoyments, so we shall possess them for ever and ever. And by the least of those, all we can possibly here lay out, will be repaid us more than a thousand fold. A Consideration, that if duly weigh'd, can't but make the ingenious, Merciful; nay, entice the most sordid covetous churl, to utmost Liberality.

I add but one more relating to GOD, which follows.

IV. *He has made us the great Objects of Mercy from Himself.* This will soon appear from a transient Reflection upon His Merciful Dealings with us; for by a serious, tho' short survey of them, we shall find they have been very many and various. Nor have His Mercies exceeded only in Number and Variety; but likewise in Continuance: as they have been freely pour'd down, so they have been constantly heap'd up upon us. I touch but upon two kinds of them, His Mercies to us

As Men.
And as Christians.

His Mercies to us as Men, are innumerable; and O that we had a meet sense of them! So He has given us Being; and to our Being has added Life; and to that, Sense; and to our Senses, Reason. To say nothing of our Judgment, Memory, Speech, and other Faculties; which as they are perfections of our Nature, are additions to our Happiness.

By how many good things likewise does He sweeten our rational Life, which otherwise would have been an heavy Burthen? For when He made our Souls of so high a Rank, and fashion'd our Bodies of so curious a Frame; if he had not provided suitably for both by gracious Dispensations; we must needs have been the most forlorn Creatures that ever He made.

His providential Care therefore has always been very tender of us: for it has daily afforded us New Mercies, or made the old ones new by undeserved Repetition.

Why has not perpetual Illness or Pain been our Lot? which thousands in the World as good as we incessantly complain of, and their complaints are sad. They cry out of Blindness or Deafness; of lame Leggs, or wither'd Arms

Ch. V. *A Rule for shewing Mercy.* 85

of aking Heads, or sick Stomachs; of troubl'd Minds, or languishing Bodies: and who kept us out of their miserable Number? Why are we not now confin'd to our Chambers, or groaning in our Beds? Or why have we not long ago been consuming in our Graves, or despairing in a more dismal place? Our freedom from these and other Miseries, is owing wholly to GOD, and solely the Effect of His patient Mercy.

Nor is this all that His Mercy does for us, for besides shielding us from Infelicities, it sends down upon us plenty of Blessings. It gives us the Air for Breath, and Fire for Heat, and the Earth and Water for numberless uses. Houses to harbour, Food to nourish, and Friends and Clothes to comfort and cover us. As it defends us in dangers, so in difficulties it directs us, and it goes along with us in all our Journeys. It furthers our Contrivances, and prospers our Callings, and helps us in our Studies and our Labours. And when we are weary'd with Business, and honest Employment; it gives us Sleep to refresh us, and Pleasures to recreate us: and 'tis hard to enumerate all its kind Offices.

But how then shall we compute the Number, or express the Greatness of GOD's *Spiritual Mercies*, which he confers upon us

As *Christians*? Here He treats us at such a rate, and heaps up such rich favours upon us, as if His heart were fix'd on *us alone*, and none in the World were to be regarded but we. For His Mercy does not only watch over us with tender care, but makes the most excellent provisions for us, that we need in our religious capacity. For as we have his SPIRIT to guide us; and its Graces to renew and sanctify our Minds, and its heavenly Comforts for our encouragement and support: so He gives us His Word to enlighten and instruct us; and His Ordinances for instruments of our Edification. And least all these should be insufficient without farther assistance, He sets other hands a work besides our own, to compass our Happiness; as Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers, *Eph. 4. 21.* And then to these earthly (tho' spiritual Ministers) He hath superadded every one of his Angels, who are generally imploy'd to guard and serve us. *The Angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear Him, Psal. 34. 7.* And are they not all *ministring Spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of Salvation, Heb. 1. 14.* If our pious dispositions and practices give us a Title to the eternal Inheritance; Angels are but Missionaries sent out upon our account. Tho' they are incomparable Beings, and glorious a-

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Ch. V. *A Rule for shewing Mercy.* 87

bove all creatures we know of; they are but Messengers which GOD dispatches into all parts of the World, to take the charge and care of us. Nor is this the office of *some, many, or most*; but of them *all* without exception: *they are all ministering Spirits.* Tho' there be several ranks of them, and every one gradually higher than another; yet the highest Angels of the highest Order minister to GOD's Elect, be they never so despicable amongst Men.

And then from these Mercies, farther Mercies result. For under such provisions, and the Angelick Ministry; how safe may we be (if we please) from Spiritual Evils? For by the mention'd helps as we are well fenc'd against Danger, so no Difficulties shall be too hard for us; we being impower'd to perform all Duties, and likewise to resist the Enemies of our Souls by withstanding Temptations and avoiding Sin. Or if thro' Infirmary we should slip, or thro' presumption plunge into wilful naughtiness (which in the midst of our heavenly assistances to the contrary must be monstrously shameful;) yet then (if we judge of GOD's *future* by His *past* proceedings) He will help us to repent and recover out of it. He will open our Eyes, in great Mercy, to see our Offences; and when we see them, He'll enable us to bewail them, and give us strength to amend, as well as Tears to lament

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88. *A Rule for shewing Mercy.* Ch. V.

lament them. He will first smite our hearts, and then break them, and then bind them up, and make them whole again, thro' that precious Blood which was shed for them. For with holy amazement be it spoken, He gave up His only begotten SON to be slain as a Sacrifice or propitiation for us. So astonishing a Mercy that 'tis hard to conceive how GOD should favour us with a greater. CHRIST's dying for us on the Cross, seems to be the utmost Expression of the divine Love, and the Highest exaltation of Heaven's Kindness; and even such as hath left no room for a bigger. For in that GOD has done all that is fit on *His* part; and all that is reasonable and needful for us.

And then besides these *common* Mercies, how many *personal* ones have we received? As returns to our Prayers, and Deliverances from trouble, and holy Elevations, or ravishments of Spirit. For when with long Importunities we have sought His Blessings, and have been fit to give up all hope of obtaining them; He has fully answer'd us. And as seasonably he has rescu'd us from discouraging doubts, when in conflicts with them they have almost overset us. Under fears also and heavy consternations He has not only sustain'd us; but out of our dejecting thoughts and desolutions, has snatched us up into high transports of delight. Christians of any perfection, if they look

look back upon their past Experiences, can easily make such discoveries as these, and attest them true from their own Observation.

Nor need we doubt but the same GOD who has been thus gracious to *us*, will so continue, and his tender Mercy shall never leave *us*, unless our unworthiness turns it away. As it has ransom'd us from Sin, so (if it be not our fault) it will convey *us* to Bliss: and in order thereto will give *us* the means of Salvation, and helps to Duty; and will teach *us* how to live, and make *us* willing to Dye, and in Death will afford *us* all needful assistances.

But O then shall not all this affect and win *us*? shall not so many, and such obliging favours prevail with *us*? Have we such rocky hearts as will not yield to GOD's infinite Kindness? very Stones themselves if not soften'd with often Droppings, are yet worn by them; and shall the constant Distillations of divine bounty make no Impression on our Minds to induce *us* to Mercy? Then we who are such *Objects* of Mercy from GOD, and refuse to shew it to our poor Brethren; have great reason to fear, that He may not only stop His from Mercies descending upon *us* for the future, but even strip and deprive *us* of those which we enjoy.

C H A P. VI.

I. *Motives to Mercy respecting Men.* II. The Poor are ally'd to us. III. And have Right to our Alms. IV. By dispensing them we shall answer the Patterns of the Good. V. And stop the Mouths of evil Persons.

AFTER Considerations taken from GOD, to draw us to works of Mercy; it will be proper to bring in such as relate to Men. Now because some Men are *Objects* of Mercy, and others are exemplary for it, and others fit to reproach us for defectiveness in it: from these three sorts of People respectively, useful Considerations will result, to stir us up to Mercy. And

II. First, Touching them whose Poverty makes them *Objects* of Charity; we may consider, that they are nearly ally'd to us. We are all descended from one common Father, and so must be of the same Nature, and ty'd close together

Ch. VI. *A Rule for shewing Mercy.* 91

together with the band of fraternity, which should be indearing, and a strong Motive to Mercy. And therefore the Prophet exhorting the Jews to feed the Hungry, and to clothe the Naked, useth this Expression; *thou shalt not despise thine own flesh, Isa. 58. 7.*

And as poor Christians are knit to *us* with bonds of *Natural*, so they are with ligaments of *spiritual* Affinity. For according to the Gospel, the Rich and Poor are both redeem'd by the same Price, as well as sanctify'd by the same Grace: all are led by the same SPIRIT, as well as heirs of the same hope. And if there be any advantage, as to the heavenly Inheritance, it seems to lie on the Poors side; at least it did so in the beginning of Christianity. For then it was said, *GOD hath chosen the poor of this World, in faith, heirs of the Kingdom which He hath promised to them that love Him, St. James 2. 5.* so that the pious Poor are joyn'd to *us* in sacred relations, which of all other are the highest and most durable. And when upon Earth they may be as rich in Grace, and may go to Heaven as well as we; and may there stand nearer to the Throne of Glory than our selves: is it fit we should here shut our hearts, or hands, or doors against them? Such scornful carriage to near kindred, is not only incongruous in itself, but will be punisht by GOD; as the known Parable

Parable of *Dives* and *Lazarus* does sensibly assure us.

Secondly, consider, *Alms are the Poors Right*. When we bestow any thing upon them we call it *benevolence*, and count it a Gift: but we may reckon it more truly the discharging of a *Debt*. *With-hold not good from them to whom it is due, Prov. 3. 27.* words which plainly teach, that those things we can well spare, are not *ours*, but the *Poors*. And who that believe and think seriously of this, either can refuse, or dare neglect to be Charitable? What, would we not be just? Would we not live and dye honestly, and pay all their Dues? In case we would, to the Poor we must pay our Charity. Fitly therefore is the Merciful Man call'd *righteous* in Scripture; when the exercise of Mercy is so eminent a piece of Justice.

Not but that Persons most just to the Poor may at the same time be just to *themselves* too. They may live according to their Estates, and their Expences may be suited to their Quality. But as they consult their port, and allow for their Equipage; so they should have due regard for the Needy, and be content to strain themselves a little for their Benefit. All their redundancies they should devote to the Indigent; and for their sakes they would sometimes cut off more than is meerly superfluous; they should find a

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Ch. VI. *A Rule for shewing Mercy.* 93

length that the defalcation would be most for their own Advantage.

IV. But as some are pitiable Objects of Mercy, whose Circumstances move *us* in way of Sympathy; so others are *noted Examples of it*, and should win *us* to follow them by a more powerful and authoritative influence.

It is a remarkable Monition which occurs, *Rom. 15. 4. Whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning.* Now if the Scripture be generally instructive by its Doctrine, then where it puts *Examples* upon record, or commemorates such as have been eminent for worthy practices; there it teaches with a double force, or two ways at once. For it does not only tell *us what* we are to do, but moreover shews *us by whom* it has been done. And so the good works are not only signify'd to be Duties by the Divine Will; but are demonstrated practicable by humane Power, men like our selves being presidents to *us* in those Performances.

Where-ever therefore the Books of Heaven, set great Examples of good works before *us*; and more particularly (to our purpose) Examples of Charity: we should by them be drawn to those laudable works; that so we may answer the patterns by coming up to them, which GOD hath given *us* to that end. Whereas if

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we resist the Impression they would make upon us by standing out against them; as by our stubbornness we dishonour GOD, Who design'd our Good; so we pull down His displeasure upon our selves.

Upon which Considerations, what can we do better than turn our Minds to Scriptural Examples of Mercy, and keep them much in our thoughts? Look to *Rahab*, who shew'd kindness to the *Jewish* Spies; and entertain'd and hid them at the peril of her Life, *Josh. 2.* To the *Kenites*, who shew'd kindness to *Israel* in their passage thro' the Wilderness to the Land of Promise, *1 Sam. 15.* To *Obadiab*, who when *Jezebel* slew the Prophets of the LORD, hid an hundred of them in two Caves, and there fed them, *1 Kings 18.* To the good *Samaritane*, who did all the offices of tender Mercy to a wounded *Jew*, that he was capable of, *St. Luke 10.* tho' at the same time the *Samaritans* and *Jews* were partly of different Extraction and Religion; and upon terms of perfect Separation and Enmity. To *Tabitha*, who was full of good works and Alms-deeds; and as one piece of liberality made coats and Garments to clothe the Poor, *Acts 9.* To *Cornelius*, touching whom we learn from an Angel's Testimony, that he was very Charitable, as well as pious: For not only his *Prayers*, but also his *Alms* came up for

Ch. VI. *A Rule for shewing Mercy.* 95

a memorial before GOD, *Acts 10.* To the Generality of *Primitive Christians* at *Antioch*, who when in *Claudius's* time there was a great dearth throughout all the World; sent relief unto the brethren in *Judea*, *Acts 11.*

Were I disposed to alledge any Examples but them in Scripture; the first (as being nearest to them) must have been * *Helen* Queen of the *Adiabeni*. Who in the fore Famine mentioned, bought up a great Quantity of Corn of *Egyptians*, and sent it to be distributed to those that wanted in *Palestine*.

But then I might truly add, that this Queen is far excelled by another, our illustrious Sovereign. For She has not only taken care to relieve persecuted Protestants of another † Nation, but beyond the Example of Her Royal Ancestors (even now in this Juncture of urgent Expence) has for ever devoted a Branch of Her own standing Revenue, to supply the exigencies of the straitned Clergy. For which, and other princely Favours to her Subjects, they have great reason to pray Her Majesty may live long, that She may continue the Happiness of Her King-

* *Euseb. Eccles. Hist. lib. 2. cap. 12.*

† Banisht from *Orange* in *France*.

doms, and the Glory of the Age in which She reigns. And as great reason they have to follow Her Munificence as far as they are able: for when a Religious Sovereign on the Throne sets so powerful an Example of Charity to the People; they ought to be affected with its mighty Influence, and to do their best to advance in Mercy. Else what excuse will they make at last, when they shall be call'd to account for so eximious and shining a Pattern, if it has not mov'd them to competent imitation.

V. But besides the Patterns of the Good, inviting us to works of Mercy; *evil Persons* afford another Motive; by unjust Reflections and abusive clamours. Particularly, the *Romanists* are here too busy and censorious. For they often upbraid us with barrenness in good works, tho' very unfairly; telling us with scorn, that our Churches are *theirs*, and so are our Colledges and our Hospitals. Now tho' enough be done to shame the bold slanders and defamations of theirs; yet let us go on to do more still; that so if possible, we may quish their injurious boastings, and put their impudence to the blush. So according to the Apostle, we shall *put to silence foolish Men*, 1 St. Pet. 2. 15. and not only obviate their present calumnies, and wipe off their false and bitter Invectives: but also prevent their future obloquies, and free our selves from

Ch. VI. . *A Rule for shewing Mercy.* 97

from their insolent Reproaches. A liberal and active **Charity** leaves no room or colour for detraction ; and they that offer to disparage such a **Charity** in others, only shew they want it themselves.

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C H A P. VII.

I. *Motives to Mercy relating to our selves.* II. It is full of *Advantages.* III. For it makes us *prosperous.* IV. *Prevents falling into common Sufferings.* V. *Alleviates Misfortunes.* VI. And entails a *Blessing on Posterity.*

THE Fourth Sort of *Motives* to Mercy, have respect to *our selves.* And by these I hope more especially to prevail, they making so much for our own Interest. For tho' some are not so good, as to do their Duty in conscience to GOD ; nor others so kind, or wise, as to do it out of love to Men : yet most have so much natural policy, as to do it for their own benefit.

II. We are next to consider therefore, that Mercy is attended with many and great *Advantages.* Several things in the World are highly *pleasing*, too pleasing to Men ; but then they are so far from tending to their *profit*, that they

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Ch. VII. A Rule for shewing Mercy. 99

turn to their Detriment, and are really pernicious, but the works of Mercy are highly advantageous to us. This Doctrine is confirm'd, Prov. 11. 17. *The merciful man does good to his own Soul.* We are so far from losing, that we are the chief Gainers by what we give; and while we relieve others, we are kindest to our selves: for the costs of our Charity return upon us in providential Compensations.

The principal Advantages that accrue from a well order'd Charity, are such as follow.

III. First, *It makes us * prosper in the World.* There is that scattereth and yet encreaseth, Prov. 11. 24. Many are afraid to give freely, lest their liberality should impoverish them; but that fear is wholly groundless, as springing up from vain distrust, or want of Faith. For if we will believe the GOD of truth, liberal Givers that scatter Alms, and even carelessly throw them about; augment what they have: and then by the rule of contraries, griping Misers who think by over-sparingness to improve their Possessions, must impair them. As many therefore as fear to give, lest they should diminish their Substance, take a right course to un-

* See Chap. 5. Sect. 3.

100 *A Rule for shewing Mercy.* Ch. VII.

do themselves; for by a just dispensation they preposterously incur, what they most dread and design to avoid. Tho' this very fear is too often Counterfeit, and a meer pretence to cloke penurioufness; which that they may the better palliate and hide, they call it Frugality.

But here it behoves us to be very cautious; to distinguish warily between the name and the thing, and not to chuse Avarice because it bears the fair title of thrift. So we shall prefer gilded and specious Sin, before real Virtue, and solid Goodness. Tho' Covetousness prevails, and over-rules too many, let *us* be govern'd by the contrary Principle, knowing we shall be the more prosperous for it.

Not that we are to be mercenary neither, and to give meerly for Heaven to requite us with earthly Blessings: that would be to sell our Alms, and make a perfect trade of Charity. But as one Encouragement to give freely, we may reasonably expect a *temporal* Recompence. So we find, *Isa.* 58. at the 7th verse; where the good and righteous are sufficiently assur'd, that if they deal their bread to the hungry, and bring the Poor that are cast out to their house; when they see the naked if they cover them, and hide not themselves from their own flesh: then their light shall break forth as the Morning, and their health shall spring forth speedily.

Ch. VII. *A Rule for shewing Mercy.* 101

speedily; and their righteousness shall go before them, the glory of the LORD shall be their rere-ward.. Now when to feeding the hungry, and clothing the naked, and entertaining the harbourless at our Houses; the great Blessings of *Light and Health* are promis'd us, and our *own Righteousness* to go before, and the *Glory of the LORD* to follow us: must not this import a marvellous Prosperity? It can imply no less than that Providence for our doing the Offices of Charity, shall guide, and guard, and bless us abundantly. So eminently as that our virtues shall shine, and be conspicuous; and our Estate, for our Quality, easy and flourishing. And *Raphael's* Saying will be abundantly verifi'd, *it is better to give Alms, than to lay up Gold, Tobit. 12. 8.*

IV. A *Second Advantage* of Charity is, *it prevents our falling into common Sufferings.* This we are taught by a great Prophet, *Isa. 57. 1. Merciful men are taken away from the evil to come.* Indeed be we never so merciful we must dye, and by Death be taken from hence: but then the Merciful temper may time our death to an happy hour, and make it seasonable. It may induce GOD to summon us hence in a wished Juncture; when the Sins of Men are ripe for Judgments, and they are falling heavy on the place where we live, and so we shall escape them.

Upon this account it concerns us to be Charitable, especially at this time. For if we lift up our Eyes, and look about us, we can't but see that Iniquities abound, and that they are of an hainous and provoking nature, such as usually bring down Calamities on a People. So that we may justly expect very grievous Evils, and know not how soon they may happen to us. Pestilence, or Famine, or Sword, or Persecution, may come immediately; nay, all of them may come at once, or all successively one after another.

But would it not then be a singular favour for us to dye first? To go to our Graves, or ascend to Glory, before the fearful Miseries invade us? The Merciful are they that may hope to be taken from such impending Evils. As therefore we would be so graciously dealt with, we must labour to be such.

And let me add; that as Mercifulness shields from common Sufferings in our Life-time, so it saves us from an unhappy Death; according to what St. Jerome has left upon record in his Epistle to *Nepotian*, *I do not remember that I ever Read of a Man that dy'd an ill Death, who while he liv'd freely exercis'd the works of Charity.* So that Father piously delivers his constant Observation.

Ch.VII. *A Rule for shewing Mercy.* 103

V. Thirdly, *Charity alleviates our Misfortunes.* It mitigates those Evils which it does not supersede, or wholly remove: Two especially,

Sickness. And Enemies.

It *lightens Sickness.* Here the State of our Bodies is like that of our Condition; not fixt or settled, but ever mutable and subject to Disorders. If at present we be healthful, the Scene quickly changes, and we are seiz'd by pain, or droop with weakness: on a sudden perhaps we fall into a Dropsie or Consumption; or are taken with a Fever in our Blood, or in our Spirits. And when such Diseases break in upon us, and confine us to our Chambers or our Beds; they soon load us with anguish, and fill us with complaints. Then (as we have cause enough) we sigh and cry out, Oh my Head! or oh my Heart! or oh my Bowels. Then we are weary of the Day; as well as of the Night; and weary of our Friends, and even of our selves; as well we may, because our misery admits of no ease or rest.

Now when our Circumstances prove so sad (as GOD knows how soon they may) would we not be glad to meet with comforts in them, as

104 *A Rule for shewing Mercy. Ch. VII.*

well as to be deliver'd from them happily? Believe it, Charity makes way for both. So we learn, *Psal. 41. 1st and 3d. Blessed is he that considereth the poor; the LORD will deliver him in time of trouble. The LORD will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing; Thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness.* If we consider the Poor so as to relieve them duly, *GOD will deliver us in time of Trouble, or in the evil day,* whatever accident makes it so. And as thus the promise is applicable to all Misfortunes of the Merciful; so to their *Sickness* it has a special regard. For till *GOD* rescues them out of *that*, He solemnly engages not only to visit but support them in it. So that if we be pious in our selves, and merciful to them that want; whenever we are sick, we are sure to have *GOD* stand carefully by us, and kindly to succour us in our needs and maladies. No less can be meant, in that amazingly familiar Expression; *He will make all our bed in our Sickness.* They whom the *ALMIGHTY* thus strangely favours, Lord! how advantageously must they lie! Whatever bodily pains they feel, they must abound with peace of Mind; and as their Souls will always be kept in Safety, so their Spirits shall often be wrapt up in Sweetness. A most valuable Privilege to creatures in our circumstances;

Ch. VII. *A Rule for shewing Mercy.* 105

stances ; so obnoxious to variety of sad Distempers.

How good a Motive to Mercy the *Healthful* may think this, I can't tell ; but they who are often *sick* ; and know what 'tis to *want* divine comforts then, and what it is to *have* them too ; will be affected with it.

And then Charity lightens the Misfortune of *Enemies*, and makes us easy as to them. It induces Providence to set us out of our Adversaries reach, to keep us from under their Tyranny and Insults, and to maintain us happily in spite of all their power and malice. So we are inform'd in the 2d verse of the last cited Psalm. *The LORD will preserve him, and keep him alive, and he shall be blessed upon Earth ; and Thou shalt not deliver Him unto the will of his Enemies.* Whatever dangers may threaten the Charitable, and whatever Infelicities they may be expos'd to from their enemies hands ; GOD will defend them against. Nor will He only keep them safe, but make them *blessed* ; by restraining their fury, that tho' they hate them, they shall not be able to destroy their Happiness by any Macchinations, He has positively said, *they shall be blessed upon the Earth* ; and therefore He will certainly make it good, and who, or what shall hinder them from flourishing ?

And

106 *A Rule for shewing Mercy. Ch.VII.*

And no wonder that GOD should bless merciful Men in preserving their Life, and in protracting it; when they do so much good, by their benefactions and Examples. As'tis no marvel again that their Enemies should be curb'd, and they protected and secur'd from them, because otherwise long life to them would be uneasie as Sickness, and more unhappy than Death.

VI. Fourthly, *Charity entails a Blessing upon Posterity.* So extensive are its Benefits that they don't terminate wholly in our selves, but stretch out to a farther length and latitude, and reach to their Off-spring. Now we having contributed to their Being, in reason we should be highly concern'd for their good; and even for their temporal Good, we should have a meet solicitude. And as Nature ties us to provide for those that have so just a dependance upon us; so in kindness we are oblig'd to make the best provision for them we can: and therefore we are bound to exercise Charity, as being the surest way to bring down lasting Benedictions upon them. *He is merciful, and lendeth* (says the HOLY GHOST) *of the righteous or Charitable Man: he hath dispersed and given to the Poor:* and what follows the Man of this character, and that goes on in these proceedings? *His Seed shall be mighty upon Earth, his generation*

Ch. VII. *A Rule for shewing Mercy.* 107

tion shall be blessed, and exalted with honour, Psal. 112. 2d, and 9th. Whence it is evident, that by shewing Mercy in *giving, and lending,* we may lay up treasure for our Children, to make them great when we are gone. For their sakes therefore let as many as are Parents (and of ability for it) be kind to the needy.

It was noted above, as Solomon's Advice; that we should *give a portion to seven, and also to eight, because we know not what evil shall be upon the Earth.* Tho' the face of things looks pleasingly now, and may smile upon us; that Aspect may not continue long; Providence may frown upon our Children, and many Evils may pursue them. But then that they may not overtake them when we are dead, let us do our best to hinder it; and that being one likely way to effect it, let us *give to seven and eight;* or be merciful to the Poor, according to our power, be they fewer or more. The more we relieve, the more we may expect shall commiserate us, or be kind to ours, in case of want.

The *Number* of Children therefore ought not to damp or cool, or at least not to quench our Charity: it should rather increase the flame, and make it burn with more heat and brightness. For the more Children we have, the greater provision we ought to make for them, and in order to that, the more Alms are necessary.

Many

108 *A Rule for shewing Mercy.* Ch. VII.

Many are eager in hunting for wealth, and follow the World with too hot a chase: ask them why; and probably they'll answer, *upon their Childrens account.* They thank GOD they have enough for *themselves*, and fear no want so long as they live; but what may befall their Poor Children after them, they can't tell, and for *them* they take such care and pains. But let these know, that works of Charity worthily done, will make surer provision for their dear Issue, than all that their carking care can lay up and leave them. For if richest Hoards be unlawfully gotten, and are the fruit of inordinate desires or pursuits; 'tis many to one but they'll melt away in the hands of Posterity, let them do what they can to keep them from consuming. But a little left them which was honestly rais'd, and out of which was paid the just tribute of Mercy; by GOD's Blessing on their wise management it may grow up into a great Estate. It would be well for Parents, and their surviving Children, could they firmly believe this doctrine and trust it according to its truth. And yet they have sufficient reason to do so, GOD having ingag'd that *the liberal Soul shall be made fat, and that he that watereth shall be watered also, Prov. II. 25.* For as some of these *showres*, like the former Rain, come down upon the Persons of the merciful and munificent; so others like the latter Rain, fall
upon

Ch. VII. *A Rule for shewing Mercy.* 109

upon their *Progeny*: and the gracious Promise perform'd to Children, in great measure is made good to Parents. For so they prosper in this World by those that represent them, when they themselves are gone into a better.

Tho' by the way, they that have no Children and have plentiful Estates, should be forward and free to Charitable Benefactions. One great Reason of GOD's denying, or not sending them Children, may be to fit them for extraordinary things of this Nature. At least they are happily qualify'd for them, and might do much honour and service to Religion, by undertaking them in their Circumstances so favourable that way.

C H A P.

C H A P. VIII.

I. *Four other Advantages of Charity.*

II. *It perfumes our Memories.* III. *It facilitates the Pardon of our Sins.* IV. *Inclines GOD to hear our Prayers.* V. *And procures us favour at the day of Judgment.*

I. **T**O the foregoing Advantages of Charity, recommended as proper Incitements to it; I shall add but *four* more. But their force, I hope will exceed their Number; for if rightly consider'd they must be of very great weight and use.

II. First, *it perfumes our Memories.* Every noted hainous act of Sin, is a Blot in our Escutcheon. Where it touches lightly, it leaves a Spot, or black stain behind it; but where it strikes home it wounds our fame, and makes a Scar in our Reputation: over-casts us with a cloud of shame, and brands us with disgrace and infamy. And as scandalous Sin does disgrace and eclipse us; so an holding course of piety and heroick acts of virtue will embellish our Names, and signallize us as much. For if they do not crown us with lofty Praise, and adorn
our

Ch. VIII. *A Rule for shewing Mercy.* 111

our Temples with Garlands of Renown; yet they'll set beautiful Rosaries on our heads, or the fair Coronet of decent applause. My meaning is, they will do something towards raising our esteem, and will help to brighten, if not to greaten our honest Repute.

And as Religion in general does us credit, and makes us venerable where we are eminent practicers of it, so charity has a special efficacy that way. This the wisest of men asserts who spake by inspiration from GOD; *he that followeth after mercy, shall find honour, Prov. 21. 21.* And there is good reason for it; for as Mercy is an Expression of duty to GOD, so it is an Office of kindness to Men: and kindness shew'd them obliges them to think and speak well of us, even when we are remov'd into the other state.

This should persuade us to be merciful. Our stay here can be but short, and our departure hence is very sure, and may be sudden, and when we die, we would be loth perhaps to be instantly forgotten. When our Bodies are interr'd, we would not have our Names perish immediately, and be bury'd the same day in the grave of oblivion: Charity helps to prevent this.

Mary Magdalen is a famous Instance of as much. She was charitable to our dying LORD, and did what was proper for, and significant of His approaching Burial; and with what success? So

So very great, that that Act of hers stands upon record to perpetuate her Memory; and prov'd a monument of Glory to her, as lasting as this World. For thereupon the LORD CHRIST declar'd, that where-ever His Gospel shall be preached, this Fact of hers should be commemorated to her praise. And therefore when she anointed His sacred Body, she thereby embalm'd her own Name; and wrapt it up in odours of Eulogie; sweeter than those of her costly Spikenard. So while we minister to the needs of the Poor, we strew Flowers upon our own Herfes: which tho they can't preserve our Corpses from rottenness, will keep our names from being offensive, and make them precious.

Not that we are to think every petty Alms will carry us up to that Penitent's pitch; or that our ordinary Charities should make our Fame ring thro' the christian World: 'tis enough if they make our Memories fragrant for a time, and conciliate so good a Report to us, as shall answer the part we sustain'd in the World. Such a report as shall be a blessing to the Righteous; as 'tis a curse upon the wicked, that *their name shall rot*, Prov. 10. 7. And because it is a *Blessing*, we may justly make it a *Motive to Charity*; tho' by no means the chief *End* of it.

III. Another Advantage of Charity is, *it facilitates the pardon of our Sins*. So the Angel told

Ch. VIII. A Rule for shewing Mercy. 113

told a good man, *Tobit. 12. 9. Alms shall purge away all Sins.* Mercy so exercis'd makes GOD unwilling to condemn us for, but more ready to absolve us from their Guilt: *blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain Mercy, St. Mat. 5. 7.* So that tho' Mercy be not appropriate, it is insur'd to the Charitable; and if it be not their peculiar Right, yet to gain it more easily and plenteously than others, is their happy Privilege: and Pardon being one of GOD's greatest mercies, they shall not miss of that, *Love covereth all sins, Prov. 10. 12.* As it is rightly express'd in alms-deeds, it so propitiates GOD, that He the sooner passes an Act of amnesty or oblivion upon our offences. *Daniel* knew this when he advis'd *Nebuchadnezzer* that great Emperor, and mighty Sinner, *Dan. 4. 27. to break off his iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor.* For why should he put him upon turning his Cruelty into kindness, if Alms did not make way for pardon? Tho' since they do so, true penitents can hardly do better than deal them out freely, that they may share in so rich a benefit. The consideration of it made *St. Jerome* declare, in his comment on the 133d Psalm, that the poor do us a great favour, in that sins which we can't otherwise wash off, alms abolish. And another great man pronounces; *Water will quench flaming fire, and alms make an atonement for sins, Eccles. 3. 31.* Upon which words, the afore said Father (in the
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f 14 A Rule for shewing Mercy. Ch. VIII.

cited place) thus descants. *As Baptism discharges our Sins, so do Alms: for the fires of hell are prepared for Sins, but alms extinguish them.* According to both which famous writers (the one of the Jewish, the other of the Christian Church) alms help effectually towards pardon, and make the procurement of it more easy.

Yet let none mistake here; I don't say works of Charity *alone* will induce GOD to forgive us. For be we never so merciful, yet unless we renounce and relinquish our Sins, repent truly of them, and return to GOD heartily, they shall not be remitted. And therefore the Prophets counsel to that *Universal Monarch* ran higher, and directed him to break off *his Sins by Righteousness*, as well as his iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor. And then indeed when we are devoted to righteousness, and settl'd in an enduring course of good works; Mercy will be of singular use. Then the hand of Charity will powerfully assist in taking out our pardon; tho' singly it be not sufficient to do it. But let as many as read this, believe it: *that if we be not righteous in all our ways, and so righteous as to exclude every known and wilful Sin out of our practice; all the Alms that we can give, and Prayers that we can make; all the Tears that we can shed, and Fasts that we can keep; and in one word, all the pious Acts we can possibly do: according to the expresse measures of the Gospel will never avail to Pardon.*

Ch. VIII. *A Rule for shewing Mercy.* 115

IV. A Third Advantage of Charity is, *it makes GOD more ready to hear our Prayers.* Thus we read, *Tob. 4. 2. Turn not thy face from any poor man, and the face of GOD shall not be turned away from thee.* Which tho' it be a Text out of the Apocryphal, is well confirm'd in the Canonical Writings: and this should draw us forcibly to the Duty. Our wants are many, and as they oppress hard upon us, so do we upon GOD to supply them, and would gladly have Him accept our Petitions. Let us be free then in giving Alms, that GOD may be ready to receive our Prayers: for if we unchristianly refuse the one, He will neither attend to, nor grant the other. *Who stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor; he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard; Prov. 21. 13.* A most just requital, tho' a sad one; for so He does but to Men as they do to others, which answers that authentick Rule of His own; *with what measure ye mete, it shall be measur'd to you again, St. Mat. 7. 2.* It nearly concerns us therefore to hear the Cravings of the poor, that GOD may hearken unto ours.

V. The last Advantage of Charity which I note is, *It procures us a favourable Sentence in the day of Judgment.* They are sad measures which the unmerciful must then expect, but as many as are of the contrary Temper shall find a different Treatment. For to use the Psalmist's words,
1-2 Psal.

116 *A Rule for shewing Mercy. Ch. VIII.*

*Psal. 32. 10. Mercy shall compass them about; and
Psal. 23. 6. follow them all the days of their Life.*
And as they shall not want Mercies while they
live, so when they are dead they shall find greater
Mercies still; and at the last Judgment the mer-
cy they have shew'd will help to qualify them for
the gracious absolution.

In the 25th of *St. Matthew* we have certain
assurance of the final Judicature, by a general de-
scription of its solemn process. From which we
learn, that the eternal Benediction and investi-
ture in the prepared Kingdom, shall be the re-
compence of the Merciful. Whereas they that
have been cold in Charity, and careless of the
poor, and have neglected the common works of
Mercy; shall be miserable in their endless state:
the cursed doom shall be denounc'd against them,
and they consign'd to fiery vengeance in dread-
ful company. *Depart from me, ye cursed into ever-
lasting fire prepared for the Devil and his angels.* So
that by exercising Mercy, we do something to-
wards securing our publick and perfect Justifica-
tion at the great day. Will not this be a mighty
advantage?

When multitudes out of every Nation shall
stand quaking before the Omnipotent Judge, as
dreading the Sentence of everlasting Death, then
for us to escape that Sentence which we have
deserv'd, and instead of falling under it to be
com-

Ch. VIII. *A Rule for shewing Mercy.* 117

comprehended in the other, which inthrones all, upon whom it passes in the Glorious Kingdom: what an incomparable benefit will it be? There never was, nor can there possibly be a greater or sweeter; and who would forgo it at that juncture for ten thousand Worlds? But then consider, this very Sentence shall be grounded upon antecedent Acts of Mercy. *Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you.* And for what reason? it follows; *for I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat, I was thirsty and ye gave me drink, naked and ye clothed me, I was a stranger, and ye took me in, I was sick and ye visited me, I was in prison, and ye came unto me.* Which makes it evident, that shewing Mercy conduces greatly to obtaining it.

To that end it serves more effectually than any Miracles, or most wondrous works that can be wrought. *Moses* led *Israel* thro' the Sea; *Joshua* stopt the course of the Sun; *Elijah* commanded fire from Heaven; *Elisba* caused iron to swim; *Daniel* shut the Mouths of Lions; the Apostles of our LORD heal'd the Sick, cur'd the Blind, rais'd the Dead, cast out Devils, spake strange Languages, and discerned Spirits. Yet of these things as marvellous as they were, the Almighty Judge shall say nothing, not one of the surprizing wonders shall be mention'd at the last day as we hear of. But the works of Mercy He will then proclaim, and thereby give notice to the vast assembly,

assembly, that they intitle us more to His blessing and favour, than others more pompous and magnificent.

It was a great word which dropt from King Solomon's Pen, *Prov. 22. 9. He that hath a bountiful Eye shall be blessed, for he giveth of his bread to the poor.* And how sufficiently will it be verify'd, when from the mouth of the Supream Judge we shall share in so blessed a Sentence? That alone consider'd well might our LORD say, *it is more blessed to give, than to receive, Acts 20. 35.* Great therefore must the Priviledge of the Rich be, when GOD has put them in a capacity (if they will but use it) of being *blessed*, and more blessed for ever than other men.

C H A P. IX.

Shewing how the poorest may be Charitable.

TH^{O'} the poorest Sort be the usual Objects of Christian Charity, and are commonly on the receiving hand by reason of their needs: yet in some respects they are capable of exercising that Charity too. For when they are *abus'd* they may *forbear*, and when they are *injur'd* they may *forgive*: and tho' they be mean and low in the World, yet in these cases they may shew as much

Ch. IX. *A Rule for shewing Mercy.* 119

much Mercy, and do it as freely as the best. At times also they may meet with some in harder circumstances than their own; and then out of their proper Relief, they may afford a little to such. For as we read of a *poor man that oppresseth the poor*, Prov. 28. 3. So poor men may succour the poor upon occasion. And when they do so from a good principle, let them know that in a small Gift of theirs there will be great Charity.

What a slender Alms in it self, was the poor Widow's, when she cast two mites, or one farthing into the treasury? *St. Luke 21. 2.* Yet because she was poor and did it with a good heart; we see there what a value the Son of GOD was pleas'd to set upon it. He did not only equal it to, but prefer it *before* the Offerings of the Rich then made. And very justly, from the disparity or disproportion of *their* Circumstances; for they gave with ease *out of their Abundance*, but she in her penury parted with *all her living*. Whence we understand that the Poor may give Alms, and that when they do so, GOD may accept it as a much greater Bounty. It teaches the Rich also to give more at times than can strictly be expected from them; to raise themselves high in the Divine Favour.

And farther yet; the poorest have *Prayers and Tears*

120 *A Rule for shewing Mercy.* Ch. IX.

Tears to bestow; and as by these they may mutually benefit each other; so they may more than requite the kindness of the rich. *A Prayer out of a poor man's mouth, reacheth unto the ears of God, Eccles. 21. 5.* So that by his zealous devotions he may bring down greater Blessings upon the wealthy than they are able to confer upon him. Especially if he adds Tears to his Prayers, which mightily inforce their Efficacy.

Upon the whole matter therefore the Poor may be as kind to us (if not kinder another way) as we can be to them. And when Providence establisht the mutual Beneficence between the Rich and them; it was graciously design'd for the advantage of both. By all means therefore let it be kept up to its due height by Both Parties; that so the good they do each other may not only by happy reciprocation return upon themselves; but reflect much Honour and Glory to GOD.



F I N I S

